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ADVENTURES IN
THE ARID ZONE BY
FRANCES ALLISON

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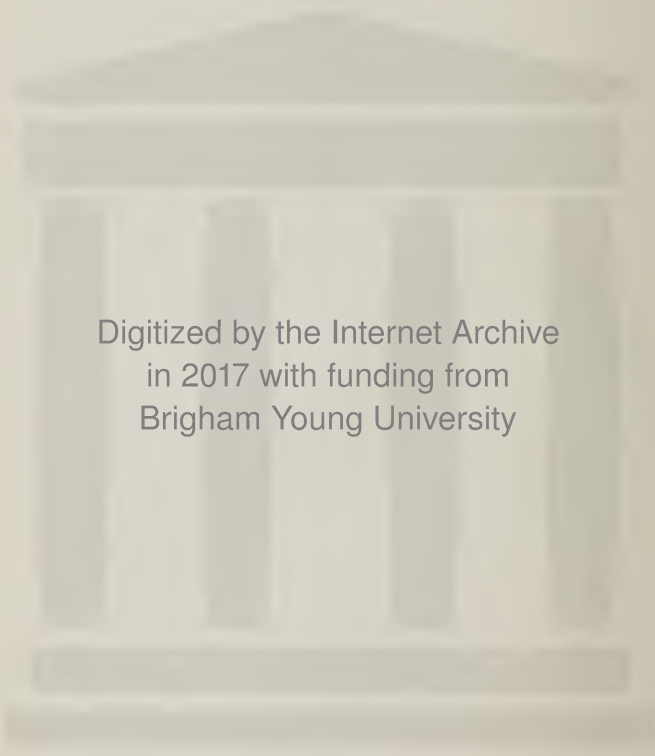
ADVENTURES IN
THE ARID ZONE BY
FRANCES ALLISON

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PREFACE

The sketches by Frances Allison contained in this book and the verses by Katharine Allison MacLean, contained in a companion volume, have been collected by their father, William O. Allison, in order to preserve work of his daughters which has given him much pleasure.

OCTOBER, 1920



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The Elusive Lion

There are few other places in the States where the mountain lion is bolder or more plentiful than in this section. I imagined we would shoot lions as casually and frequently as we would hedge-hogs or squirrels, but the fact of the lion's being numerous is due to his sagacity and to the extreme roughness of the country.

The U. S. Biological Survey estimates that the average mountain lion destroys five hundred animals a year. The government employs hunters and trappers to kill these and other wild animals. They are allowed to keep the bounties on the dead animals, besides their salaries. The bounty on a lion amounts to seventy dollars, twenty given by the county, twenty by the cattlemen's association, the rest made up by the different cattlemen including the one on whose range the beast is killed—still the hunters aren't getting rich over their work. Since we have been here five lion skins have been brought in, two grown lions and three kittens, caught the same day with the aid of the hunter's pack of hounds.

Speaking of hounds—we have what most people admit is the finest one around. He was shipped to us from a famous Kentucky kennel. He is middle aged, well mannered, handsome to anyone who admires strength, and a wonderfully quick and savage fighter when the occasion demands action of that kind. It took him about a month to "savvy" the country. Trails don't

last long in this clear dry air, but he finally got straightened out. Now we can't let him loose unless we are prepared for hours of hunting, as he'll stay with a trail indefinitely. "Roamer" is his registered name and he came guaranteed to run nothing but big game. He will take no other trail unless carefully put upon it. His work is artistic,—I can think of no other suitable adjective. For instance; we put him after a skunk one night, the three other dogs got into such a state that they were exiled in the chicken house for days. Roamer not only cornered and held the skunk, he stalked home in just as immaculate and gentlemanly a condition as he had gone out. This happened at night, so we aren't prepared to say what his tactics were,—anyhow they sufficed.

One day we were deer hunting around "Sitgreaves Mountain," a very rough part of the country. I had the hound on leash, when he struck a hot trail and nearly dragged me off my feet in his eagerness. We were on foot and not prepared for a long hunt, but when we came upon the track of a cat pad as big as a saucer, we could not resist letting the dog loose, hoping we might be able to keep near him. The next forty-five minutes were a nightmare of scrambling and stumbling around the mountain side at top speed. I was unable to keep up and while trying to cross an especially large boulder had frankly to give up. There I lay gasping on the rock in somewhat the position a child assumes when coasting "belly whoppers" as they call it.

The doctor returned half an hour later, said the dog had gotten beyond his sight and hearing. Our whistling and calling proved of no avail, we had to desert our four-footed friend. On the third day after, when we had about despaired of ever finding the dog again, an

old sheepherder told of having seen and heard a hound on the far side of the mountain. He said the dog was footsore and making slow progress, but was too intent upon the trail to notice him, tho' he called to him.

When we finally located our hound, he was a sorry sight. His pads were cracked and bleeding, of course, he was dead lame and making about two miles an hour, but still on the trail. He must have treed the lion, perhaps more than once, and tried to hold him, hoping we would come to do our share.

We carried him back to the car, sixty pounds of dog, half a mile. By the time we had reached home he was too stiff to move and had to be lifted out of the car. He took a long drink of water, turned around three or four times, settled down behind the kitchen stove and slept twenty-four hours.

Anyone who has heard the scream of a mountain lion, will not easily forget it. We heard one while riding down "Bill Williams" Mountain. It happened on a full moonlight night, but the small aspen trees were so thick about us that only an occasional patch of moonlight filtered thru, like a silver leaf fallen from the tree tops. We were riding, and our horses made slow work of the steep path, but after that lion screamed, (I can't say whether it was ten feet or a quarter of a mile off) we gave a very fair imitation of Paul Revere on his famous ride. The Doctor was ahead, riding a sensible horse, tho none too sensible at the time. I was riding our two year old colt, that we had just started to break. Tho much occupied with my horse, that lion's cry made my hair stiffen as a dog's back bristles when he encounters an enemy.

Lions are easier to hear than to see and yet only last week the manager of the largest ranch around came to

town with a strange story that is fully credited by those who know him, as he is an unimaginative man, reliable and slow of speech. His name is Nick Perkins. He says he stopped overnight at the "Bar Hart" ranch where one of his punchers is "baching." After supper when they had knocked out their pipes and were about ready to turn in, they heard what they thought was a man screaming outside. Before they could investigate further there came a loud scratching at the door. Perkins threw it open and there stood a big lion, like a much magnified housecat, begging for a bed by the stove, only Perkins seems more inclined to think that the animal was using their door to sharpen its claws on. It started bewildered at the men and then sprang off. They saw it by the light from the doorway, plunge straight into a barbed wire fence. It recoiled and charged the fence again, but before they could get a gun loaded it had cleared the fence and disappeared in the darkness. Several people afterwards claimed to have seen the lion's tracks around the door and leading to the fence. Here is another story, the details of which must be left to the imagination. The strange facts discovered, however, have been fully established.

Burros haven't much value here—the Grand Canyon is full of wild ones which are quite a nuisance. An old man who has homesteaded a place in a beautiful high valley about thirteen miles from town has a few.

One old jennet he had discarded as useless, had even contemplated shooting her, as she insisted upon getting into his horse pasture, breaking down the wire, or crawling between it or even rolling under it. This old homesteader is much troubled with mountain lions that steal his colts, sometimes almost as soon as they are born. Lions seem to have a predilection for horse-

flesh. He had, at the time I am writing about, moved his mares to a pasture nearer town, to prevent the loss of some expected colts by the lions. One morning he came out to find Mrs. Burro in the horse pasture—as usual—and by her side a brown burro colt. Ridiculous little things, these burro colts, looking ever so much like big jack rabbits! To his amazement the man came upon another occupant of the pasture—a large lion stretched dead in the grass, with his skull crushed in by some heavy blow. The dead lion and the burro and her colt were the only things in the pasture. That evidence tells the story.

We hunted out in that neighborhood some time later and the old man told us with glee about having collected seventy dollars bounty on the lion skin. “And how is the lion-killer?” we asked. “Oh, she,” he answered, quite unabashed, “I killed her for pig feed.”

Speaking of pigs, makes me think of an amusing mistake the children made.

A poor Mexican, in payment of some services rendered him, gave us a day-old orphaned piglet, a poor little red thing, born with only three legs. We bought it a nursing bottle, and took it home to the girls. I told them to be careful of it and noticed that they handled it very gingerly, but never thought that they failed to recognize what species of animal it was, though it was dusk when they took it and we left it lying on the porch, wrapped-up, while we went in to supper. Therefore we were very much amused when Julia turned to Caroline at the supper table and said: “Grandpa would say ‘too much, too much’ if he knew we had four dogs, a cat, a big pig (we have a nearly full grown one), two horses, chickens, and now—a baby mountain lion!”

Keeping the Game Laws

We are going to try and shoot a wild turkey for Christmas dinner. I write this quite openly and brazenly, though the hunting season on turkeys closed October 31st.

As one old cattleman put it, when he invited us out to his ranch after the first snowfall, to shoot a buck: "'Pears like the law moves powerful slow in these parts."

We had a splendid chance to shoot turkeys in season. The hound still trailing on leash led us to a big bunch of about twenty. We didn't exactly get "turk-fever," but they looked so slow and cumbersome, as they crossed a little draw in front of us and climbed the other side that we tried to get nearer them. My goodness! They ran like horses. I can picture their shining bodies now as they disappeared among the pine trees, like miniature express trains. Next time, if there is a next time, we'll shoot!

One weekday we stole a few hours off for duck hunting at Smoot's Lake. It was a busy day, but we sandwiched the hunt in between keeping a seventeen-hand-high mule of the State Road Camps under chloroform long enough to permit the serious result of a nail run high into his hoof to be removed, and trying to hypnotize a wild "bronch" who could kick backwards, forwards and sideways with equal facility, into thinking he enjoyed swallowing several yards of stomach tube.

We found the lake full of ducks. I don't shoot much, as one or two shots, even with the twenty gauge, knocks my shoulder out of commission.

The doctor took the twenty gauge and I picked up a borrowed twelve gauge he had been using and walked around the lake to fish out a dead duck that was floating towards the shore. Having on waterproof shoes, I was able to wade out and pick up the duck that had become entangled in some weeds, but as I turned to go back, right over my head, flying low, came two big red-headed ducks. I forgot I was carrying the heavy gun and couldn't "pass up" such a fine chance to shoot. Next thing was a big bang and a big splash. I found myself sitting waist high in chilly lake water, while my partner vainly endeavored to stifle amusement in sympathy. However, I had cause to feel sympathetic amusement for him on the way home, though a trifle dampened, for he picked up a bottle of iodine from the floor of the car and absent-mindedly placed it in his hip pocket. Half way home we struck a big bump, the bottle broke with burning and highly colored results.

The editor of the weekly paper here printed warnings and exhortations about keeping the game laws, but a few days before the duck season opened we came upon him, with the city attorney and the police magistrate, busily engaged in building a raft to go out after some ducks they had shot in Coleman Lake.

The law against shooting does and fawns is supposed to be strictly enforced. The first deer brought in when the season opened was killed by Marshall Bobby Burns. It was a young buck, but with horns so short that they couldn't possibly have been noticeable to the hunter.

A game warden came in with a doe and fawn, which he not only boasted of having shot, but openly ex-

hibited. One of the Forest Rangers mistook some domestic turkeys for wild ones, brought them to town with much gusto and hung them up—with a card explaining his prowess—in one of the butcher's windows, but was rather taken aback when an irate farmer galloped into town and demanded forty-five cents a pound for his birds.

Two people, one of whom you know pretty well, came upon a stray sheep in the cedars just at dusk. The poor thing had a broken leg. With no shelter in sight and the coyotes starting their quavering songs, its chances of living till morning were simply nil, and so—well, next day the Scotts bought three glasses of mint jelly and a bottle of mint sauce.

Therefore, I reiterate: We are going to try and shoot a wild turkey for Christmas dinner.

1917.

A Hunt at the J. D. Dam

The hunting here is excellent; many people depend largely upon it for their meat supply. To the south, in the pines, squirrels can be had at any time, in unlimited numbers. There is an almost unbelievable amount of them, big gray fellows, with tasseled ears.

North, on the plains among the scrub cedars, there are many rabbits, both jacks and cottontails. Open hunting season the year around on them also.

We don't get very much time to hunt, but we always carry a gun and have the reputation of taking our Ford over roads that no other car could, would, or has dared to tackle.

We try to get off every Sunday for the day—I won't add "weather permitting," because, until the snows start, it always permits.

One Sunday we decided to start for the J. D. Dam, twenty miles away, too far to take horses and return the same day, "impossible for an automobile" on account of the rough roads—but a Ford isn't exactly an automobile anyhow. We got to within two miles of the Dam, and walked the rest of the way on a good cowpath.

The J. D. Dam has a "hant." Not one of these venerable old spooks, but one of recent acquisition, of less than a year ago in fact. Two "bad actors" hunted with an old trapper, a native here, around Sycamore Canyon. The canyon is considered the roughest spot in Arizona

and second only to the Grand Canyon in size and beauty, also abounding in game and unexplored Cliff Dwellers' ruins.

The trapper was foolish enough to tell his stranger companions that he had a hundred dollars or so with him. They murdered the old fellow for his money, and threw his body into the Dam (which is only a few miles from a branch of the Sycamore Canyon) where it was discovered some weeks later.

Since then lonely range riders have spread vague reports of strange sights and sounds around the Dam. Even in the bright sunlight of early morning the place looked weird. It is an artificial lake, about half a mile long and a quarter of a mile wide, full of tall dead pine trees which crows usually use for a roosting place day and night. The water is black and the shore consists of black slippery mud and spongy gray moss. Cattle cries echo mournfully across the water and through the woods, as many frequent this place in a country where Water is King.

We discovered a little blood-stained boat, hidden among the big fallen dead trees in the gray moss.

However, we spent the day very enjoyably, hunting ducks and squirrels.

I, while "shooing" ducks over to my partner, who waited on the opposite shore, encountered a large tarantula and promptly forgot all about the ducks. "Step on him" came good advice from across the lake. But the hairy black thing had a wider expanse than the ball of my foot. Really, I believe he was as much afraid of me as I was of him. He buried his head in the moss, as an ostrich is said to do in the sand. I was finally successful in dropping a big stone upon him and hurried away, feeling as if a thousand tarantulas were dancing

up and down my spine.

At sunset, fairly well loaded down with small game, we started back to the car. But while we had come down to the Dam on one cowpath, any number led away from it in what seemed about the right direction. After some indecision we started out on the most likely looking, walked for some miles and, finding we were wrong, retraced our steps.

It was getting dusk when we reached the Dam and a little hard to see the paths.

First, we wearily discarded half of the game, then rallied our hopes and made a second start. Soon, however, we lost the path in the woods and, after hours of rough walking and climbing, found we had circled back to that plagued Dam again. There it lay in the pale light of a new moon, a white mist covering its mysteries, and night birds making strange noises from behind this veil.

Twenty miles from any place, nothing to eat but unsalted game, a spooky dam for drinking water and company, also for company several dead calves we had come upon near the lake, not at all attractive to us, but already attracting the plentiful coyotes, as their persistent howling near and far attested. Rather tough luck!

My companion stuffed a duck into each pocket and threw the rest of the game aside. I wearily unleashed the dog, his straying from us seeming a matter of no consequence just then. We sank down disconsolately on a fallen dead tree.

Before long the dog started on a trail, but we never moved. Further and further away he sounded, till he seemed to stop moving, and we could faintly hear him barking "Treed." Something wailed on the lake, a

night bird I suppose, and something struggled and splashed about in the water—a wounded duck perhaps. A low groaning sounded at intervals, which may have been an old bull muttering to himself. Suddenly, I jumped up, "Come on," I cried, "we might as well see what the dog has, as sit here all night." So we started out again. My feet were tired and kept trying to kick the stones aside, instead of stepping over them, but I couldn't manage them properly. The little .22 rifle I carried seemed to weigh about thirty pounds. However, we moved on toward where the dog was continually barking. All our sense of direction had left us, but we knew we were getting nearer him.

At last (those two words are easy to write, but they mean lots)—at last we came upon Roamer and, bless his heart, there he stood before our patient, battered little car, wagging his tail and springing about with delight. Perhaps in his experience his masters had been lost before, so he knew what we were looking for.

And that car! It looked as good to us as a well-lighted home, an open fireplace, a planked steak and coffee for two!

We've been out to the J. D. since, but, believe me, this time we took an axe and blazed the trail!

1917.

Calls in the Wild

Being the only veterinary (and assistant) in the northern section of the state has drawbacks as well as advantages. The stock here have a large range and lead a natural healthy life, many days pass in which we peacefully putter about the place, or take the dogs out on the hillside and shoot a couple of squirrels for supper. Nevertheless we have found it necessary to be always prepared for a sudden trip, with medicine cases in order, a suitcase packed, and suitable clothes either on or laid out in readiness for a quick change.

While the roads permit automobile travel, calls are more or less simplified, but there were many times during the winter when no car could venture outside the city limits on account of the mud. The logging camps are sometimes inaccessible by automobile, but they always meet us with little gasoline speeders that whiz along the narrow track at what first seemed an alarming rate of speed. We have been whizzed in these little open cars from a drizzling rain-soaked valley to a sunny mountainside, and also had a sunny start, and ended in the cold mists of the mountain, where the rocks and trees glistened with dampness, and assumed strange proportions in the fog. Men appeared in shiny black oilskins and dripping beards, and a mangled horse seemed a thing hopelessly beyond repair. All a weird nightmare trip, till the cheerful lights and buzz of voices in the cook tent, the clatter

of dishes, and odor of good food, brought things back to the normal again. People may picture the lumber-jack living on canned beans and heavy biscuits. As a matter of fact he eats better food than many of us could afford, and as to his appetite—well, it quite defies description. When a stranger is first ushered into the big tent and seated at one of the long oilcloth covered tables, there is a silence till they “get your number” and find out whether they are being watched or laughed at. A few words of greeting, and a strict attention to one’s own plate, and the talking soon starts in again. Then one may quietly observe the lumber man as he really is. Most of them are Scandinavians, many of whom have misshapen, discolored teeth. Other nationalities are also represented. They are usually large men, but one occasionally sees a small sturdy fellow who can outwork them all.

We received a message one Sunday at dinnertime, to meet a train due in four minutes and inspect a car-load of race horses. The car was a special attached to the East Bound Limited. As the train only waited a few minutes, we stood ready for it at the far end of the platform, some distance from our machine, with only the required inspection blanks. A very much distressed little Englishman appeared at the door of a special express car to inform us that one of the valuable race horses in his charge was apparently dying of pneumonia. The animal was heavily insured, and in case of death the insurance could not be collected without the certificate of a graduate veterinarian stating that he had administered treatment. I grabbed an astonished Pullman porter, and we sprinted for the medicine cases while the doctor made out the certificate. We got back just

as the conductor started making high-signs to the engineer. He stewed considerably, for the train was behind its schedule, but held it while I mixed a capsule on the platform from hasty directions above, in record time. Richard administered the dose as the train started to move, and got his knuckles badly chewed, a thing that rarely happens to him. He dropped off safely beside me, as I anxiously ran along holding back the car with inefficient strength.

We first became acquainted with our friend "Heinie" Sorrel in the local feed yard. A horse of the "Jew's" had died suddenly there. Called in at the last moment Richard diagnosed the case as forage poisoning, which was substantiated by our finding moldy hay in the barn. The "Jew" was frantic, and asked for a postmortem affidavit, so that he could collect damages from the liveryman. We came down again about suppertime. There was no one around and I was glad of it, as it was my first postmortem. The doctor's diagnosis proved to be correct. A capsule administered early in the afternoon had not been swallowed, indicating a paralysis of the throat, a diagnostic symptom of forage poisoning. We looked about for a witness, but there was no one around save an ignorant Mexican stable boy. So we returned to our subject and I asked and was receiving a little instruction on equine vocal chords, when we heard a big booming voice coming from the stable—"and when I get you outside the city limits I'm goin' to thump you, and I'm goin' to thump you good, too," said the voice; "That ——— Mexican"—and it stopped, as there loomed into our presence a very angry man. He was very dusty, gray with it and very tall. The doctor of these stories is six feet two, but this man was very much taller. He was very angry

about something just then, and all the characteristics we have since observed in him are best described with "very" in front of them. We were glad to have a witness appear so opportunely, even though he did seem a trifle extraordinary. Richard hailed him over and explained the case to him quickly, too quickly. He showed him the undissolved capsule and asked him to feel of it. Now "Heinie" is the last man in the world to grasp a thing in a hurry, though he has a good level head, and the last man to acquiesce in anything he does not fully understand. He looked at the mutilated carcass, and at us, then slowly backed away. "Strangers," he said in his big slow voice, "I'm a bad man to joke with, and I'm awful mad just now." I thought of the "thumping" he had been promising the Mexican boy. We assured him we were not joking, and explained the whole case over again. He had heard of Doctor Scott the "vetinary." When he realized he might be called as a witness he took everything seriously and conscientiously. "This here Red Hales (the liveryman) is a friend of mine," he said, "but I reckon he can't go for to poison other people's stock." More questions and explanations and questions. Then in came the "Jew" and one of the local lawyers. The "Jew" was more excited than ever. His description of the dead animal had changed from "a good horse" to "the finest horse in the country" and of course its money value had gone up proportionately. The Doctor and I were tired and anxious to get away, but first we asked "Heinie" to tell the lawyer just what we had shown him. He studied the ground, scowled, scratched his head, and straightening up boomed out: "Well, as I get it, it's this a-way. This here horse of Ben's choked to death eating moths in the hay."

The case was settled out of court—fortunately—so “Heinie’s” testimony was not necessary. But he has learned to like us. He was “Boss” at the road camp last summer, and called us in to look over his mules whenever possible. He has bought a ranch and is farming now. In spite of his nickname he is an American, hailing from Michigan many years ago.

Late in March it rained heavily alternate days, until nearly seven inches of water had fallen. Many dams were washed away, including one of the City Water Company’s, which took away with it a portion of the “sawdust” where the Mexicans that work in the mill live. That night, during the excitement of volunteer shifts of men splashing to and from the dam with bags of sand and lanterns, we received an urgent call from a forest ranger in Spring Valley, twenty miles away, to come to his place next day. As automobiling was quite out of the question we at once made arrangements with the livery barn to have a stout team of horses hitched to a light wagon and at the house next morning by eight o’clock.

Next morning at eight-fifteen a boy rode up to the house to say that the livery stable had had such bad reports of the roads to Spring Valley that they did not care to let any of their horses go. We had promised to go out, so there was nothing to do but saddle up our very old horse and our very young horse, pack our medicines and lunch, and start. This, in spite of our haste, took some time, and we did not leave the house until nine o’clock. Everyone who met us kindly informed us that “we’d never make it!” We had had no occasion to ride lately, and both riders and horses were in poor condition for a long trip, but we all felt finely at the start, especially the dogs, who bounded along

through the woods and flats, running about three miles to our one.

We jogged out of town, but the mud soon slowed us down to a walk, a pace that we had to keep almost the entire forty miles. In some places the road was almost completely submerged in water, in other places it was washed out, and the mud was continuous, red and black, soft and slippery and often sticky, retarding our progress greatly. We got off and walked up a long hill to ease the horses, the mud had about taken the frisk out of us all. Our feet, while walking, were turned into great unrecognizable lumps of red clay, and were almost too heavy to lift. I thought of the soldiers and horses marching over such roads, dragging their guns and provisions along, and then sleeping on the soaked ground, too. That kept me from complaining.

I find that the words "hardships" and "luxuries" are very flexible. Almost everyone has them both, according to the lives they live. I used to feel that mending stockings was a hardship, shampooing one's own hair unnecessary drudgery, and cooking a meal quite impossible. I have also known times when just to sit and rest by the roadside seemed a luxury, when sleep seemed the most desirable, wonderful thing in the world. I have swayed in my saddle and jerked up with a start, keeping awake only by efforts that were agonizing. A clean bed—something most of us take for granted—seemed better than all the golden stairs and pearly gates of the Promised Land! And the need of water! I have been so thirsty nothing would come to my mind but vision-like thoughts of tables spread with snowy cloths and silver, covered with glasses of water clinking with ice, pitchers of water, and plates of ice

cream. I have taken cup after cup of alkali water, knowing it was so much poison, yet not being able to do without it. As to the luxuries—the poor man seems to enjoy as thoroughly reading the paper in his stocking feet, after a supper of beef stew, as any of us do a box at the opera after a rich dinner.

But to return to this particular ride, noon found us only half way to our destination. A homesteader hailed us from his lonely shack with an offer of "grub," but we declined. As our horses walked slowly but steadily on, we got out our lunch, enjoying it as best we could while riding. It did taste good, but we had to save some of it, for we saw that we would be out till after suppertime. This road is one of the loneliest in the country. Soon after leaving the half-way settlement—a few homesteaders' shacks, called Piman Valley—we began to climb. The road was very rough and much washed out, but not nearly as muddy, so we made better time. The woods on each side of the road were very thick. Things rustled mysteriously about, and the dogs found much to get excited over, but we had not time to be led into the tempting wilderness. Up and up we climbed till we reached one of the loveliest high valleys about here, called Spring Valley from the many clear, cold springs in it.

The Ranger Station was beautifully situated, the people were agreeable, the buildings were well kept and clean. It was three o'clock when we arrived, cramped, sore, and with very hungry horses. We finished our work in about an hour, and were strongly urged to stay over night. It was a little hard to say no, but we were expected back, so at four we saddled up, climbed onto our horses, a trifle stiffly, but with all the "pep" we could assume before the forester, and started out. The

forester's wife ran out of the house with two large slices of cake, a welcome addition to our not over-abundant supper.

A few miles on the return trip and we began to ache all over. It grew dark quickly. As the road was rough and down hill, we had to stick to that eternal walk. I developed a stiff neck and a headache, but I thought of the soldiers again and remembered how lucky we were in comparison. We soon found it easier to get off and walk for about fifteen minutes at a time. The very old horse and the very young horse stuck at it finely, but the young one—mine—did not know what to make of it, and when I walked beside him he kept bumping me with his nose. We ate our supper on foot. I was almost too tired to eat and gave most of mine to the dogs. As time went on I found it more difficult to mount and dismount; I'd think I could make it, but I'd just stick and dangle over the saddle in a very uncowboylike manner.

The return was slower than the morning trip, as the night was very dark. It was difficult to keep to the road, and in places we had to leave it to ford through washes so deep that we were forced to draw our feet up to the horses' necks. It took time to find just the right places to cross these washes. First a dog would splash across, then another, then one tired pony would feel his way in, stop and drink in the middle, while the other joined him, after which they'd clamber wearily and at times with some effort up the slippery bank. We slept in our saddles, and we slept as we walked; we bumped into barbed wire fences, and strayed off the road, and one time arm in arm with horses following patiently, each of us depending on the other and both asleep—the blind leading the blind—we fell right into

an old dead cow. I say "into" because that is just what we did, over its back, and through its partly eaten ribs. That sounds like a calamity, but we were too dulled with weariness to mind it much; in fact, it was a sort of welcome respite, and livened things up a bit.

Oh, how good the town lights looked! But they were very disappointing, for they never seemed to get any nearer. I got wound up walking through the mud, and refused to be put back on my horse; it seemed as if I always had been and always would be walking along like that, first pulling out one heavy foot, then the other. The road seemed full of people pressing down on me, and yet I knew I must push on through them.

It ended at last, a little after midnight. I don't remember getting to bed, but all of us, dogs and horses included, awoke after a ten-hour sleep feeling quite as fit as ever, and we made a special point of appearing around town next day and answering with casual indifference any questions about "how we ever did it."

One day in the middle of dressing a severe wire cut we received a message to catch a train leaving in about twenty minutes for a town sixty miles west of here. How hard it was keeping my mind on forceps and probes, while it wanted to fly around thinking how I'd ever change my dress, boil the instruments and pack things up, while my good man flew down to the drug store and bought some necessary things we were out of. It was in the days of mud, and our car was in the garage in town nearly half a mile from the house. So when we had finished with our patient, Richard ran down to the drug store, and sent a car up for me and the bags. With shoes unlaced, a bag in each hand, my hat on backwards, I dashed into the waiting machine, which arrived at the house just as the train, that

we could see from the door, pulled into the station. When I ran to the waiting train I was quite dismayed to find that the Doctor had not yet arrived. So I sat down on the last of the parlor car's steps and laced up the one still delinquent shoe, determined not to let that train go without my better-half. Just as the conductor seemed ready to deposit me forcibly upon the platform, I saw a pair of long legs flying across the railroad tracks, which I pointed out to the conductor as a proof of my statements. I think most of the passengers who were looking out of the windows thought they were witnessing an elopement.

We had a nice lunch en route. Richard was able to buy a dollar safety razor and shaved with cold water, which improved his appearance, but not his temper at the time.

Our destination was a perfectly flat little desert town, such as one sees pictured on the screen. As to the case, it was a sad one. We have pretty good luck, but they aren't all miraculous cures. This one ended in a single shot from a six-shooter, and we found ourselves stranded in this tiny town, evening having come and the last train was gone.

This was another time when the small-fry expected us home, and when we were tempted to stay over night, for at the station we found a good Harvey Hotel. But it was starting to snow, and wet wood does not make a good morning fire, especially in the hands of children. So we went down to the freight yards and interviewed the yardmaster. He was a bit dubious, but said the freights sometimes carried passengers, and if we returned at eight-thirty sharp we could probably ride in the caboose.

We went back to eat our supper and were rather sur-

prised to find our client waiting for us, and insisting that we dine with him.

At eight-thirty, or a little before, we presented ourselves at the end of the freight, and were met by an irate little conductor who did everything possible to discourage us. A man he would carry, but a woman—NO! They had accidents nearly every night, snowy nights the train always ran off the track; they couldn't make the run in less than six hours and they always stopped a mile outside of town! A fat brakeman with a lantern stood beside him and corroborated his statements by solemn nods of his head.

"Why, Lady," shouted the conductor, "I wouldn't even carry my wife's photygraph in this train!"

I think Richard, for my sake, was about willing to give up the trip, but I was somewhat annoyed:

"I don't know why you object to me so," I said, "but just to show you you can't frighten me I'm coming along."

"Well, don't blame me"—and his voice trailed away in dimming desperateness as he hurried towards the front of the train.

We got on, but none too soon. Our friend must have gone up to buzz in the engineer's ear, for we started with a ferocious bang and crash, that nearly snapped our heads off. Inside the caboose were three young men going to a dance to be held in the next town. The caboose was clean and warm, dimly lit by two kerosene lamps.

Pretty soon in raged the little conductor, followed by his satellite, the fat brakeman. He nodded gruffly to the young men, demanded our tickets, shouted to the brakeman to tell the engineer to back up to town, as he had too many cars on, then he glared at me tri-

umphantly I sat upon a narrow leather seat, determined not to wobble when the train bumped, and tried to read by the dim light.

Well, we backed up, and came forward, and backed up, and bumped and dropped off cars, and took on cars and sidetracked, and ever so often in would bob the little conductor or the fat brakeman, to look us over. The young men reached their destination and dropped off into the snow.

Pretty soon the conductor came in and stirred up the stove, then the brakeman showed us where the drinking water was. Next time our little friend casually dropped a magazine in my lap, and soon they were stopping to talk and smoke as they came in and out.

While Richard smoked a cigarette in the cupola, I nodded on the uncomfortable little seat until I was suddenly awakened by a lantern shining in my eyes, and looked up into "Fat's" face. "Lady," said he, in his blunt way, "would you like to go to bed? Because," he continued, "if you will take your shoes off you can lie down in one of our bunks. They may not look very clean, but there ain't no bugs in 'em." Richard joined us, and as I was awfully tired and we were still three hours ride from Williams, I accepted the offer. The bunk seemed very comfortable to me, and I chose to accept the assurance about the absence of any small undesirable occupants in it.

It seemed only a few minutes until Richard called me to get my things on, and we stepped off into the soft deep snow, almost in town, with a cheerful good-night from our hosts.

We meet "Fat" and his snappy little boss at the Harvey lunch counter occasionally, and I feel sure next time we want to ride on their freight we will be welcome.

1918.

Cowboy Lore

This is not a eulogy of the dead, a gray-beard's reminiscence of times long past, or an article on a species of homo now extinct; it is just a few observations on the cowboy, as he was, is, and very likely evermore shall be.

I met by chance an acquaintance of mine at the El Tovar, Fred Harvey's famous hostelry on the rim of the Grand Canyon. She was a woman of the world, who looked upon my migration to the West as an amusing whim.

I took her to the Hopi House to see the Indians dance to the music of their own wild singing, and beating of drums. Of course she knows her operas and other good standard music, but has no appreciation whatever of the music of brooks, and trees, and rain, or of the midget orchestras of the fields; therefore she found the Indians merely "very amusing," and having handed them some money in much the same way that we "cross the poor old Gypsy's hand with silver," walked out. I followed, still half in the realms to which the Indian music always takes me; to the sun-flecked woodlands, to the sparkling trout streams, to the snow-hushed forest, where the Brave silently reads the story left by the Wild Ones on its white winter blanket, or stands on some black rocky height, looking up at the silver-sprayed heavens, and praying Old Man for Strong Medicine.

"What a pity," said my friend, as we inspected the antics of two cinnamon bears caught as cubs in that vicinity, who have grown up in a cage on the hotel grounds, "what a pity the Indians are almost extinct, and O! what a pity the cowboy is a thing of the past!"

I stopped, dumfounded. "A thing of the past!" I exclaimed. "My dear lady, who do you suppose was responsible for that steak you had for dinner?"

She raised her eyebrows in mild rebuke of my outburst, saying: "Do you mean, who do I suppose cares for the cows?"

I smothered a smile, for the way she said "cows" brought to my mind her thoroughly Eastern ideas of all cattle—sleek, placid-eyed Jerseys and Holsteins, that peacefully chewed their cuds in daisy and buttercup be-sprinkled meadows.

"They don't milk range cattle," I remonstrated; "they drive large herds of them long distances, and brand and earmark them."

"Certainly," she answered coolly, "but I have been given to understand that men in Fords did all that now."

I had to be rude enough to laugh at that. "When Ford can make a car," said I, "that will turn on its hind wheels, stop in fifteen feet while going at full speed, discover that you are trying to disentangle a certain wary animal from the herd, keep its headlights on this animal, following him through a course of gymnastics that would make an acrobat gasp—when Henry Ford can make cars that will do all these things and a whole lot more, and buck you off, too, just for good measure—they will be worth what they are now with two ciphers added to them."

"Indeed," replied my companion smiling, but unconvinced, "Then do show me one of these picturesque cowboys on his versatile steed, and just wait while I fetch my camera."

We strolled toward the well kept barns and enclosures, no cowboys visible among the short little grooms, with their gaiters and cardigan jackets. On the way we met Billy, who arranges trips down the canyon for the more adventuresome tourists. His perfectly correct English riding-breeches, his English saddle and bridle, his tame broncho, disguised by the arts of an English horse-tonsorial artist, even his English accent, elicited no comments of surprise from my companion. They were quite what she was used to, though the natives here consider his "get-up" unique, to put it mildly.

As we talked with Billy, I heard horse's hoofs on the hard road, and turned to see "Boney" Jones riding towards us.

"Here comes the real article now," said I, nodding in his direction.

"A cowboy?" questioned the lady, turning sharply.

"Boney" wouldn't take a prize at a beauty show, he is tall, and as thin as his name implies, he is a young man of Mormon extraction. He was riding a good sized horse, a maverick, that was still something of an outlaw. He had ridden over from the round-up camp, situated in that section just then. He wore a week-old beard, and looked none too prepossessing, nevertheless he is an A-No.-1 cowpuncher, greatly in demand among the stock-men, and has a few head of cattle himself. His leather chaps were tied to his saddle and he wore the customary blue jean trousers and jumper coat, which some vary with khaki.

My superior friend looked him all over, and her ex-

pression changed from surprise to something very like contempt.

"Why that isn't a cowboy," she cried, "Why he's wearing *overalls!*"

I stepped out into the road, and stopped him with a gesture. I had learned better than to take these broncos by the bridle, or rest my hand on their manes. As it was the horse snorted and sprang away from me.

"Good evening, Jones," said I, "This lady" indicating my companion, "is from the East, and she'd be very much obliged if you would tell her what your line of business is."

He lifted a conservative sombrero, and answered evenly; "Punchin' cattle (kyattle, he pronounced it) I reckon, Ma'm."

She lifted her eye glasses from a chain pinned to her side, and looked him over again.

"But my good man," she questioned, "Where are your-er-trimings?"

Jones' eyelids quivered an instant, and I knew he was "on." No one, is more aware of the Easterner's idea of what he ought to be than the cowboy himself.

"I'm done plucked, Ma'm," he answered after a moment's pause.

"Plucked, and by whom, pray?"

"By the pictures, Ma'm, and the tourist's idea of what we ought to look like, and the Western story books."

She failed to grasp the significance of his answer, couldn't understand that it is their own sensitiveness, and sense of the ridiculous that now makes all the better class cowmen so carefully avoid any grand-stand play. They have had an overdose of "Seeing ourselves as others see us." The cowboy still loves to whoop and

race and shoot, to wear gay handkerchiefs, fancy chaparajos, hats, spurs, etc., etc., in fact many of them have these treasures, which they occasionally don, but to see them at play is about as hard for the uninitiated as to catch a partridge drumming; unless the spirit of mischief overcomes their shyness, and they "frame up" some wild prank on the tenderfoot.

My friend had continued to regard Jones, but seemed to consider him unworthy meat for her camera. Now she lowered her glasses.

"What a pity riding and shooting have become a lost art," she sighed.

Romance personified does seem almost a necessity in such surroundings as the Grand Canyon.

What she said had cut the sensitive cowboy feelings to the quick, and his face flushed. Next moment I saw a six-shooter in his hand. His horse's ears went back, and his eyes rolled in anticipation of the noise of the shot. I stepped hurriedly out of the way. "Boney" looked about impatiently for a target. One of the sleek fat mules that amble down the Canyon carrying the heavy-weights, stood tied to a tree near by. His head drooped, his eyes were closed and he was taking a nice little nap in the late afternoon sunshine. The rope that tied him to the tree was taut with the weight of his hanging head.

Bang!

The rope was severed with a suddenness that awakened the mule with a shock. He reared, kicked, and bounded off down the road with more speed than he had probably shown before in his life.

Like a flash Jones' lariat shot after him, and settled about his neck. The broncho stiffened and braced himself, and Mr. Mule stopped short.

Now the Fred Harvey System and the Santa Fe Railroad do not permit "rowdyism" on their premises, and I heard a faint; "Oh I say you know—" of protest from Billy, but he's a good little sport and was as interested as we were.

"Boney" released the mule who trotted off indignant-ly to the barns. His revolver was out of sight again, and he coiled up his rope with swift carefulness. Then he pulled down his hat, tightened the saddle girths, and settled into his saddle. I thought he was preparing to leave, and was gratified to hear my friend's camera click.

All of a sudden that cowboy waved his hat, gave a whoop, dug his spurs into the outlaw bronco, and entertained us with a most exciting bucking exhibition. I then remembered that I had seen that same pony in the bucking contest for local cowboys on the Fourth of the previous July. Of course the poor animal knew just what was expected of him.

People began to appear from all-sides, timid guests, white capped cooks, train-men, waitresses and grooms, but ducked for shelter behind any convenient object. My friend climbed up on a nearby fence, with generous exhibition of "the latest" in silk hose, and I followed her.

The bronco bucked here, there, and everywhere, while his rider replaced his hat, and with a rather set smile essayed to roll and light a cigarette. He finally drew up in front of us. The horse's sides were heaving, and his nostrils were distended. "Boney" himself was somewhat out of breath.

"Plucked Ma'm" said he smiling, "But still goin' strong."

The lady seemed quite thrilled and elated. She thrust

her hand into her brocaded purse and pulled out two silver dollars. Clinging to me she held them towards "Boney". I expected to see him draw back offended. He did hesitate a second, then held out his hat for them. He looked at the silver a moment, and reaching into his own pocket, drew out a quarter and a half-dollar, these, with one of the silver dollars he handed back.

Here's your change, Ma'm," said he, "You can see all that at the movies any time for two bits," and placing his hat on his head he loped off without another word.

My friend was quite overcome, in fact she nearly fell off the fence in her excitement. She is sure "Boney" has missed his calling by not decorating the screen. I could not make her realize that he is just one of hundreds of others greatly needed in the work they are doing. And right here let me say a word for the young cattlemen, whose claims for exemption were recognized by the draft boards, but who were so fiercely condemned by many of the towns people. We can all understand and admire the spirit of the man who wanted to go to war and mix up in the thick of the fight. But stock interests all over the country have suffered seriously from lack of trained men to handle the cattle. Undoubtedly the exempted cowboys have been of as much use to their country as those who voluntarily entered, or were drafted into the army.

Our local dentist, a typical small town know-it-all fellow, tortured me mentally as well and physically for about half an hour one afternoon, railing against the young cattlemen who had elected to stay at home and look out for their stock.

"Let the boys go and fight," shouted the dentist, waving some devilish looking little instrument in front of my nose, "We'll punch the cows for them!" A rub-

ber dam and several "wads" kept me from either laughing or protesting. Like most of the towns people, who never look beyond their neighbor's yards, he had no idea of the arduous life the cowpuncher lives. It is work that begins with the light and ends with it, with only short pauses for hasty meals. This is during the round-ups, which are in progress about half of the time.

What do the men and women know of western riding, who hippity-hop on to a gentle horse, and jog along the smooth road for an hour or so? Even their well mannered steeds would faint to see a pony and rider come clattering down a rocky slope in a wild chase after some mutinous steer, slipping sliding, leaping and sometimes falling. Most riders take their feet from the stirrups when traversing very rough ground, so that if their pony tumbles they will "fall clean". And falls, contrary to much eastern opinion, are very frequent among the range riders. Roping, good straight roping, not the Wild West Show twirling stunts, is an art in itself.

I saw a man put out an eye of his poor tired pony with his quirt one day. Each man has usually about ten horses in his "String" on the round-up, and rides one a day, or half a day if he is near enough camp to make the change. In this case the horse wrangler (that is the fellow that has charge of the horses only) had his pony fall on him and break his leg, and the spare horses wandered off. While one man searched for them the other riders had to keep working on their tired mounts. Round about, ever alert, turning, twisting, chasing, the horses so eager and willing at first became fagged, like tired children forced to play a game enjoyed while fresh till they staggered with weariness. Nothing tires a rider like a tired horse. This particular horse had to

be frequently stirred up with cruel spurs and quirt, until a blow over the head so injured his eye, that he later lost the sight of it. Yet his owner couldn't be called a cruel man, and I have seen him pat the pony apologetically when he looked at the poor blue-white sightless eye.

Cowpunchers seldom carry rifles, they are a hindrance to them, their ropes catch in them, and the rifles swing so much when the horses are in motion. Consequently some rare and unusual shots that they are bound to run into on the many miles of country they cover, have to be passed by. But one noon on a hunting day of ours, we stopped and had dinner with the rodeo (the round-up) and enjoyed some stewed venison, all the more perhaps, because the season was out. Many of the "boys" carry six-shooters, and this deer had been shot in the neck by one of them with his "trusty six."

Two weeks later, it was early September, we were invited to a turkey roast with the same wagon. These turkeys had been secured in a novel manner. Three riders, working the pine country, came upon a flock of about thirty young turkeys. None of the men had guns, Of course the birds started to run, and would have flown away if closely pressed, but the men loped quietly after them, just keeping them well in view (which wasn't so easy over the rocks and through the thick brush) down one side of a draw and up another. After about twenty minutes of this the turkeys began to tire. They opened their mouths and spread their wings, and tried to hide in the brush. Then the men closed up on them, and each one "got him" an exhausted young turkey. Two of the fellows killed theirs on the spot, the third brought his back to camp alive, and tied it by the leg to a wagon wheel, intending to tame it, but as the poor bird

drooped and would not eat, he joined his brothers in the dutch oven, and was converted into what a foreign friend of mine calls: "Delicious delicatessen."

The genuine cowboy has his own particular brand of music. He sings to himself, to the cattle, to his horse, but it's hard to catch him at it. His song is a droning, whining, growl, not to be compared with his red-skinned brother's, especially when he intersperses it with bits of ragtime, or old hymn tunes. I don't say there may not be some latent Carusos of the plains,—I haven't found any, that's all.

We took a thoroughly "parlor broke" young cowboy friend of ours out to the Ash Fork round-up wagon in our car one Sunday. On the way out he apologized for the fact that we might have to dine with "An-er-lady-er, who poisoned her husband." He mentioned her name, saying she had a few cattle in that section.

We followed the wagon's tracks where they left the road, over a mesa full of prairie dog holes, through which we steered a course with difficulty, and finally came to the camp, under some cedar trees, near a fair sized dam. Dinner was in progress, so we lined up, cafeteria style and helped ourselves to tin plates, forks, knives, spoons and cups, also butter and jam, sugar and milk. All of these were on the back of the cook wagon, which served as a sort of side-board. Then we passed around to the fire, where the cook presided over huge black pots, with the air of a modern magician in khaki pants. These pots contained the usual stew, beans, potatoes, coffee and tea, and—in a dutch oven—biscuits. A small chivalrous person ahead of me helped me to beans, and speared me a potato and a biscuit, which was all I thought I could manage, but Richard, who came behind me, helped himself to everything impar-

tially, he being one of those long thin persons, hard to fill up, like a Christmas stocking. The cowboy works every day in the week, but this was Sunday and some one had brought two cakes out from town, a white and a chocolate. These stood conspicuously on the back of the wagon, and were eyed with hungry adoration by the boys, in much the same way cannibals are said to gaze upon a prospective missionary stew. You get your "grub" an go off aways, sitting down on the ground when and where you please (many of the men just squat on their heels and seem perfectly comfortable).

After I had settled myself, Turkish style, I found there was another woman beside myself in the group. She was seated upon a rolled up bed, busy with dinner, like the rest of us. I gave her one glance, and dismissed the thought that she might have been the one our friend had mentioned, for her face was round and full, and she ate heartily, in a most contented manner. She was dressed in suit of brown bloomer overalls, that came to her ankles, and wore a huge man's hat, entirely covering her head. But after some observation on my part, I began to change my mind about her. Our friend studiously avoided introducing her to us, though we were introduced to everyone else. Then her effusive advances were always met by the men with dignified courtesy and a hasty retreat. After dinner she cornered Duffy, the very Irish horse wrangler, brought him over to us, and forced an introduction.

It was she.

Her face was round and red, but there it's resemblance to jovial frankness ended. Seen close to, it was like looking into the face of a fat stone idol, cold, cruel and calculating.

Duffy's idea of an introduction is very formal, this

one was drawn out to a harrowing degree. He advanced his left foot and made an outward gesture with his right hand, cleared his throat, began; "Dr. Scott" (gentlemen first in Ireland, I take it) "Meet Mrs. ———, Mrs. ———, meet Dr. Scott." Then reversing the gestures in my direction and clearing his throat again: "Mrs. Scott, meet Mrs. ———, Mrs. ———, meet Mrs. Scott." We bowed and scraped, while Duffy, red and breathless, mopped his perspiring face, quite overcome by such unusual exertion. I found myself speaking of the weather, conscious at the same time of a wild desire to ask for gruesome details. But the-er-lady was no whit abashed. She talked and talked until our gentlemen cowboy rescued us adroitly, with the details of her wordly possessions still partly untold.

Was she really a murderess, and if so, why?

I pestered our friend and several other reliable people for information. But their replies were somewhat vague. They seemed loath to discuss the matter, and referred me to the papers two years ago that had been full of it. Finally an old Cattle King, who is also a good friend of ours, told me what is known of the story. It follows:

A few years ago Arizona was wet, and it was soaking sopping wet, too. Ash Fork, a town of about two hundred inhabitants, boasted of eight saloons, all making money.

One well-to-do, strong young cattleman, following in the steps of a good many now respected citizens in this town, took a wife, while in a more or less drunken state, from among the dancing girls of the saloon. Women were scarce in those days, especially the right kind of women. This woman reckoned his stock interests in dollars, and was both disappointed and chagrined on finding no great amount of cash at her disposal.

They lived alone on their ranch, these two, far from town or neighbors, and here the strong man's will seemed to have been turned to water. The ranch life suited the woman little, and they came to town often, where she bemoaned to her dance hall friends, the loss of excitement, the wine suppers and the old life. The husband turned much of his stock into cash to satisfy the demands of his rapacious wife, often taking poor prices to make the sale. Finally, at her request, he made her the largest possible allowance he could afford, six dollars a day, an unheard of sum to the other ranchers' wives.

The poor fellow started to drink heavily. His wife, still discontented, insisted on a large sale of cattle, after which she demanded a city life. So they moved to San Francisco, where the wine suppers, and all that goes with them became a reality.

His friends lost track of the cattleman, new "friends" of his wife's choosing were all he now saw, people of an unhealthy artificial world, who hardly knew there was a sun that rose gloriously over the mountains and plains in the morning, and left them to the tender light of the moon and stars in the evening.

Finally discovering his wife with one of her lovers, he was somewhat brought to himself. But, true to his type, he failed to place all blame on the woman—he rather blamed himself for not having held her respect. After a scene, some crocodile tears on her part, and many promises of fidelity, the husband tore himself away to take a famous cure for inebriates.

In the mean time, a man left in charge of the ranch being dishonest, the cattle disappeared, no new calves were branded, no crops put in. The ranch went to ruin, and the income derived therefrom dwindled to almost

nothing. This was the state of affairs when the reformed man returned. The happy meeting he had pictured was entirely spoiled by the bad news he bore. Instead of being glad and willing to return to the ranch, and start life over, as he had hoped, his wife flew into a rage, and refused to leave her friends and pleasures. But the man, clear-headed now, and determined as of old, insisted, and they left California for Arizona, which had become a dry State during their absence.

Buried once more on the ranch, they were seldom seen. Occassionly the woman came to town for supplies, and express from California. Riders sometimes stopped at the ranch, if the woman was at home they saw her only, her husband was always "Away," "Asleep," or "Just around somewheres," though his saddle was invariably in the barn. If someone called during her absence, they found a gray faced, blue lipped man, who dragged himself about, just a ghost of what he used to be. Of course the neighbors, the nearest of whom were about ten miles away, shook their heads and talked. But people are so busy here fighting this dry land for a living, that they have little time for other people's affairs.

Two friends of the dying man found him one day, during his wife's absence, sitting on the house steps, shivering in the hot sun. To their sympathetic, "Why man, what ails you?" he whispered huskily of a fear that had come to him lately, a fear that he was being poisoned. They tried to laugh him out of it, and finally left, though he laid cold, blue-nailed hands on them, and begged them to stay, his big sunken eyes full of dread. They rode away, but something of his fear had gripped their hearts, as they confessed shyly to each other, and they resolved to take some action in the matter.

About this time a rumor floated back from California

of a slow poison scheme concocted by the woman and a lover still in that city, who hoped in this way to gain the cattleman's money, which in reality was practically all gone. This lover, shot in a saloon fight, is said to have told of the plot when dying.

Two days after his friends visited the ranch, the man died. His wife rode to town and announced his death in a matter of fact way. And here my story must be a little vague, as the data is vague and disconnected. I hear the man was buried. Suspicion being later aroused, the body was exhumed, and traces of poison were found in the stomach. Poison of the same kind was also found hidden in the house. The woman is said to have made some sort of a confession, which she later denied, now saying of his death that: "The Keely Cure done it." There was talk of a trial, but anyhow it all blew over, perhaps partly because his property being gone, there was no cause to bring any distant relatives forward, who might have stirred things up.

"Vengeance is mine" and He is meting out a suitable one in this case. No more wine suppers and city life. The money has gone, and the cattle have dwindled, the lover is dead. None of the "Real fellows" respond. It's all they can do to show respects to their old friend, but it's plenty. So the woman continues to cast a baitless hook upon a fishless sea, poor thing—poor thing!

The most ardent admirer of the wild and woolly cowboy would have been quite satisfied with their behavior here early on the morning of November eleventh. About three o'clock that morning we were awakened by the town Marshall emptying his six-shooter skyward. Then the mill whistle began to blow. As both of these are fire signals we thought little of it, and settled to sleep again. Then came more shots, the round-house whistle

started to blow, and the church bells to ring. Pretty soon shots, with Indian-like war whoops and a "wah! wah! wah!" between each shot, told us the twelve cow-punchers who had brought in a shipment of beef cattle the night before, had joined the celebration, too. Then we realized what it must be all about, and left our beds to have a little celebration of our own. We switched on all lights, fired off the six-shooter several times, sang the "Star Spangled Banner," "God Save The King," and the "Marseillaise." Perhaps we all said a silent prayer to—I know I did. Someone down town took up the moving-pictures announcer's big megaphone, and began to shout: "The war is over!" "The war is over!" The telephone kept ringing, while excited voices cried to us that: "The war is over!" "The war is over!"

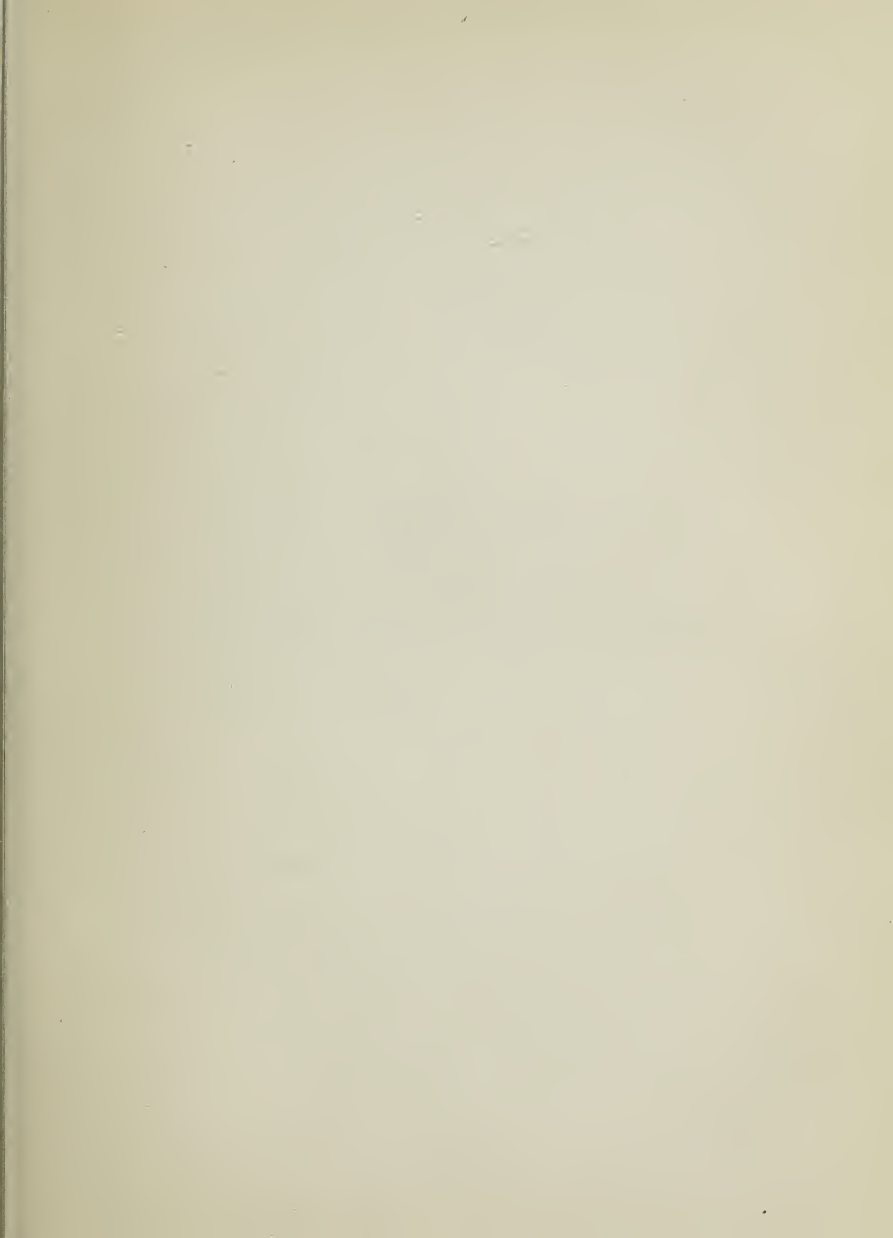
About this time bootleg whiskey at eight dollars a pint began to get busy among a certain element.

Some of "the boys" saddled their horses and rode shouting and shooting about the town, in the most approved movie-cowboy manner. No one molested them, everyone understood their access of spirits to be only half whiskey. An occasional crash of glass told us that some of their bullets were not aimed skyward, but sometimes electric globe-ward, and also (ironic fate) smashed through the windows of the old deserted saloons.

"The war is over! The war is over!" shouted the cowboys.

"The war is over! The war is over!" The earth seemed to throb with the meaning of it as I stood outside, sending up my little prayer, the stars seemed to flash it back, and: "Thank God, Thank God!" beat back my answering heart.

1918.



THREE WISE MEN SAT
AT MY FIRESIDE AND
THESE ARE THE TALES
THEY TOLD

I. The Solved Enigma

Many a yarn has been told before my little fireplace. Under the influence of the brightly burning, comforting fire, many confidences have been entrusted to me, more than one heart has lightened itself of trouble there.

Here of an evening have sat Three Wise Men of the West, drawn close to the cheery warmth, and the tales they told spread as colorful and changing as a kaleidoscope before me.

One evening late in November the wind rudely shook my little house, rattling the windows, and rushing around the corners. The rain poured down outside and in, for it ran in little pools from the window sills and trickled under the door. I had pulled a huge chair close to the hearth, its high back protecting me snugly from the chill of the room. The firelight shadows leaped about the ceiling in a wild dance, offsetting the peace of my big red cat, who slept soundly on my lap, and my hound, who lay stretched out comfortably near the fire. I sat as relaxed in body as my dumb friends, but my mind danced weirdly with the shadows to the music of the rain and wind. Therefore, I was thankful, if somewhat startled, to hear a knock at the door. My opening it disclosed one of the Wise Men in a shiny, wet slicker, of which I relieved him, before welcoming him to a seat by the fire, where the cat climbed approvingly into his lap and the hound lazily thumped a welcome on the floor with his tail.

This visit was something of a surprise to me, for while the Three Wise Men often visited me together, or in couples, this was the first time one had come alone. However, I was glad, for this one of the three was an enigma to me. A man still in his prime, tall and very blond, strong and capable; big-hearted and wide between the eyes, and they were marvelous blue eyes that flashed like sapphires, eyes that many people found difficulty in meeting. He was a keen observer and a good story teller, but of all the three, he alone had never spoken of his own life. He was sensitive and something of a woman hater, which made him more of a study. Many times I have observed him drift into thoughts so deeply as to be oblivious to all about him, and at such times a look of utter unspeakable sadness came over his face, a look that wrung my heart and caused others involuntary sighs. Any efforts on my part to evoke a confidence from him had been quite futile so far, but tonight, as he sat looking silently into the fire, something told me he would speak, that he had come to me for that express purpose, because he felt he must talk to someone. I was right. After a long pause, during which he stared into the fire and absently stroked the purring cat, he threw his cigarette butt into the flames and turned towards me.

"Some day," said he, "you may hear my story, but I'd rather tell it to you myself and I feel I must talk of it tonight. May I?"

I assented quietly, and looked into the busy fire as he began. I will tell it in my own words. His style of speech was vivid and stirring, if sometimes ungrammatical, but I find it quite inimitable.

"I have been married, but my wife—is dead. She came here from the East some years ago, to rest and

write. We fell in love soon after we met, that is, if what I then considered love can be called that, for she loved me with a love I neither appreciated or comprehended, while I—God! what did I know of love at first? What does any man know of love or womanhood whose sensibilities have been blunted by associating only with women—if they can be called women—of a certain type! This girl was unlike anyone I had met before, a lady, an aristocrat, but broad-minded—a dreamer and an idealist, but practical, too, and high-spirited. She was kind and gentle towards all things, nearly always laughing and happy, seeing all things at their best, like Browning's Last Duchess, 'She liked whate'er she looked on and her looks went everywhere.' The mountains, the woods, her pets and also me; all seemed to her as Heaven sent. Her enthusiasm and energy were far beyond her physical strength. For the snobbish little social set of the town she cared nothing, but in my company she was as light-hearted as a child, like a song bird and I alone seemed to have the power to hurt her. Wherever I rode she wanted to ride with me, no matter what the weather, she asked to be at my side. My life was rough, so were my companions; it was not always convenient to have her, and I tried to discourage her on several occasions by making rides way past her endurance. How well I remember one day when we returned from a hard, rough trip! Our tired ponies came to a halt outside of her home and she, still smiling, was unable even to attempt to dismount. When I asked her brusquely why she didn't get down, she just shook her head. I finally lifted her from her horse and as she lay still in my arms I found she had fainted there.

Fool that I was! Such love comes but once to man

or woman, why couldn't I have seen, have recognized it in time!"

He was silent, and I, not daring to speak, stirred the big firelog and waited. Presently he continued:

"One day in the saloon, I overheard some of the boys talking about me, laughing at my constant companionship with a woman. They said I had lost my manhood by it, and I, filled with shame and false pride, mentally agreed with them, not seeing my manhood, my courage, all were lost in deserting a God-given love.

"After that I told my little girl I must ride without her. It haunts me, that look of hers when I told her. Have you ever seen a little trusting child abused? Isn't it hell? That's how I feel about it now when I think of her standing there in her little leather coat and breeches, looking very young and boyish. She didn't argue or reproach me, just got on her pony and rode slowly away.

"I'd stay away days at a time after that, longer in fact than was necessary to disprove the boys' chaffing, and each time I'd return to find her a little paler, thinner and more serious, but she would open up like a flower in my company. It wasn't that she lacked for friends or admirers. No one was more universally liked, even adored. But she was of the type that puts all heart and soul into one and a very unworthy one I was.

"Then one day I took her on a short ride with me, to please her, and she was so wonderfully sweet and I longed so to have her for mine, that I asked her to put aside all delays and marry me at once.

"She thought a while and then turned to me:

" 'If you'll let me, and *want* me to be always with you and never leave me, I will,' she answered.

"And because I longed to hold her in my arms, I promised it should be so. I thought I truly meant it when I assured her she should be ever with me, because I wanted her to. If I could have just one year of life with her always at my side, I would be willing to forego all the rest of life now!

"We were married and I began to find out how man was meant to love woman. How she should be a combination of baby and angel to him.

"There was no riding to be done with the fellows then and we worked and played together, she and I Under the stars and in the rain I've made our camp and spread our bedding, but no inclemency of the weather, no hard ground or long riding ever brought from her the slightest complaint.

"She grew very brown and supple in this outdoor life and sometimes a touch of something beyond this earth seemed to light her expression, for she seemed to have the faculty of absorbing only the best of everything about her. But she was jealous, too, my darling, and I loved her more for that earthly touch, tho' the Bible does say something about a jealous God, doesn't it?

"Then the rodeo started. A friend, a false friend rather, took me aside and warned me this was no place to take a woman, and that old hellish false pride came to me again. If I had only remembered how little they knew of women of my wife's type, of the love that makes man and woman one. They, whose women's chief delight lay in secret love affairs, in indolence and gossip!

"I can't tell it all, it's like asking a murderer to go ~~over~~ the scene of his crime. She didn't say much, just,

'You promised me, but if you *can* leave me—and pray God you *can't*—I have no more to say.'

How she clung to me that last night! I held her in my arms and my heart ached at the thought of parting, but 'My manhood,' 'No place for women,' and such cant rang in my head. Too late, too late, I learned a true mate is as one's self, it is the meaning of life, one heart, one soul, one body.

"I left ~~next~~ day before daylight. There were a few agonizing minutes, when she clung to me and begged to be allowed to come with me and sank back saying, half sobbing, that when night came I couldn't stay away and leave her alone. I tore myself from her arms and was soon galloping off in the cold, gray, early light, that she so loved to ride in. I forgot, or put aside all thoughts of her who was half of me, of my very heart and soul.

"We rode mesas and forests, we camped in canyons and at ranches. Sometimes the boys got whisky and I fell back into my old rough ways, putting from my mind the woman whom I now know must have been suffering the agonies of hell. She whose word was sacred to her, who had loved and idealized, home alone, with sad and bitter thoughts like ghosts crowding about her, knowing the man she loved had lied to her, betrayed her. She would never have gone to an outsider, it was between us and I know she fought it out alone—alone. Her principles weren't the average, they weren't mine, but God knows they were His.

"We stopped one night at a ranch about fifteen miles from town. It was prettily situated on a hill with a dam below it, perhaps you have been there. As we ate supper two of the sporty married women from town—this place is full of them—drove up in their car, looking

for amusement and bringing plenty of alcohol. One of them I had known rather too well at one time. They were both tall handsome girls, typical of their kind, never up to much—from lack of brains, I guess, unless jazzed up with a few drinks.

“I could have left them and ridden home, the fifteen miles was nothing, but—well, there’s no use making excuses—I didn’t. We fellows sat about on the few chairs and the table, while the ‘ladies’ paid rather indiscriminate attention to all of us. I wish I couldn’t see that scene so plainly. The one room lit by two small oil lamps, it was chilly out and I sat on a little rocker between the lighted stove and the window, facing the door. One girl—I can’t tell you all! The other was entertaining us with the latest dance and, incidentally giving us an exhibition of the latest in pink silk underwear, too. The men laughed and joked coarsely. Empty bottles lay under the table and the ranch cats stirred about restlessly. I heard my horse neigh outside and a distant answering neigh, but such things were frequent and I thought little of it.

“Then the door opened quietly and my wife stood framed in the doorway. She looked first at me and then at the scene about her, but her expression never changed. Oh, she was game all right, a thoroughbred thru and thru. Her little leather vest was open at the neck and her white shirt collar turned down above it. She looked so slight, so clean, so inexpressibly appealing. Even as I watched her, great rings seem to come under her eyes, making them unusually big and shadowy and she leaned wearily against the doorsill, her thumbs caught in her belt and a six-shooter she carried when riding, dangling by the trigger guard from the last two fingers of her right hand.

"All noises ceased, and perhaps for half a minute she stood there motionless. I tried to rise or speak, but something in her attitude seemed so far aloof, so of another sphere from ours, it kept me still.

"Suddenly she straightened up. Her eyes flashed but her voice was very quiet as she looked at the two women and, moving from the door a little, nodded her head towards the night outside. 'Go at once,' she said.

"Those two, shrinking, cringing, protested at their lack of clothes, but when she spoke again her revolver lay loosely in the palm of her right hand and her voice was cold as ice and rang clear. 'Go!' she repeated. It was enough, they obeyed and she closed the door quietly after them, still facing us.

" 'I came,' she said softly, looking at me, 'because I was so desperately lonely. I see I have intruded,' and then sharply, 'Sit down,' as several of us began to move. Now, with her gun pointed towards us she looked from face to face, slowly, deliberately. All knew her, all respected her, not one but would have been bettered by her presence. Slowly she looked around, the gun pointed at each one, perhaps unknowingly by her, but that searching glance and pointed weapon were an ordeal for all who faced them.

"Only I prayed she would hurry and give me the fate I so well deserved.

"Her glance came back to me and I rose in spite of her warning. 'For God's sake, girl, shoot, and shoot quick,' I implored in a voice that was little more than a husky whisper.

" 'Stand still,' she answered gently, 'I will.'

"With a wonderfully swift movement she turned the revolver that was levelled straight at my breast to her

own. There was a deafening report and she pitched headlong at my very feet."

The clock ticked insistently in the silence after he ceased to speak. I counted its strokes to keep myself steady. I wanted to cry, to comfort him, what could I do or say?

He lit a cigarette with hands that shook distressingly.

"There's an old trite saying, but it's true, boy," I managed finally, "'Tis better to have loved and lost, than never to have loved at all.'"

He seemed to ponder on this till his cigarette was half smoked, then throwing it into the fire, he rose, lifting my sleepy cat carefully to the floor. "Thank you for listening," he said, "I guess it's helped me lots to have you"—and then he smiled, a sad smile tho—"you are one of *her* kind," he went on, "but don't you ever fall for one of us roughnecks."

Then he slipped into his slicker and splashed off in the darkness.

II. In Lighter Vein

This was another stormy night and we were all, the Three Wise Men and I, inclined to be a little peeved at the weather, for it had snowed and rained, and was now snowing some more, those persistent flakes making as little impression on the soft unfrozen ground as the stray ones that occasionally worked down the

chimney, ending their short lives on the flames in one defiant hiss.

Yarns had been spun, as usual, but stories of interest in this rough country are mostly of the heartrending, dramatic type. A hard, cruel country doesn't breed jokes, and that's a fact, therefore it follows that the things worth telling aren't usually of the humorous kind. Perhaps nature has established a resistance against this grimness by giving those who dwell with her a fine, clean sense of the ridiculous.

Because I felt the need of a laugh, I turned to Florian, who is the most wisely humorous of the Three, and asked him to draw on his more humorous memories.

Let me tell you something of this Wise One first.

To begin with, of course his name isn't "Florian."

I call him that here because of an old French chanson that suits him a little. Oh, but he is refreshing in a town of this caliber! An artistocrat from the top of his well-shaped head to the soles of high-arched, narrow feet, coming of a good family and wealthy. He received his schooling largely in the East and has sown a variety of wild grain rather promiscuously all over the United States and Canada, not viciously ever, but from an excess of spirits and temperament. These country women spoiled and adored him, for he was very irresistible with his thoughtlessly well-bred manners.

Even to me, whom he calls his twin sister, he seems like a glass of champagne, not only like it in his refreshing effect on others, but like it himself, as clear and beautiful, and as joyously full of bubbles and effervescence. I have never known anyone who could at all times and without the aid of stimulants, talk as fast and amazingly; and yet underneath these bubbles lay

a mind as keen and alert and as fine as the amber champagne in a Venetian glass, when the bubbles have died down.

This thoroughbred is not easily recognizable in the garb he affects hereabout. I overheard the immaculate young man at the station newsstand pointing him out to a charming girl tourist—thus:

“See that tall guy in the tight blue jeans? Yes, the one that needs a shave and is chewing tobacco—wonder how he keeps his teeth so white—well, he’s worth millions, yes, just millions. He goes around here like that all the time, stays in those clothes till he hits San Francisco, then gets into a dress suit and never takes it off till he comes back here again.” That’s just about Florian’s undeserved reputation in these parts; the Spaniards would call it “Muy malo,” and he thoroughly enjoys it, gloats in it, in fact. He does what he wants, always making sure it is what he really wants, considering all the consequences beforehand, so he seldom goes far wrong, being generous and kind-hearted by nature. I wish the strength of my convictions were as strongly developed as his. It’s because they are somewhat so—we agree in so many ways that we scrap a lot—that we call each other twins, and if we greet each other as twins should when we meet after a long absence, why it’s in the middle of town in broad daylight, to the joy, envy and pretended horror of some of the female population. Should I happen to ride to town and meet Florian walking, and he’s headed for the station, or some such place at a short distance, with all the hospitality of the owner of a big touring car I greet him, “Want a lift, twin?”

Taking my foot from the left stirrup I throw my weight on the right, he, lithe as a young lion, uses the

left stirrup and swings himself unto my horse's back, behind the saddle, and so we sail thru' town, once more to the joy, envy and pretended horror of some of the populace. We don't believe in growing old, this twin and I, we are two "boys" that just never will grow up.

Of course Florian is very presentable at our little fire-side powwows, his long, thin, six-foot-three form showed off to a splendid advantage in a dark gray suit. He doesn't use cigarettes, he was chewing—a cigar, and threw the poor mutilated thing into the fire before complying with my request.

"I feel about as humorous as a sick calf, Frances," said he, "and I did so want to tell you a grewsome one about a friend of mine. We celebrated his birthday at Ash Fork last night and he's still in bed at the hotel. His mind was as strong as mine, but his—his stomach wasn't!" Florian isn't nearly as wild as he likes to make the old gossips think, he has acquired a habit of raving about his "wild parties" which no one who knows him well, takes seriously.

"By the way," he went on, "I was out at old Davenport's the other day and found him very much upset by an invasion of trade rats, he says they are leading him a worse life than he had when he was married. Didn't you know he had been married? Oh yes! years ago he had a little Irish wife, a tiny thing. He used to drink a lot in those days. When he'd come home drunk she'd beat the stuffings out of him and every time she'd hit she would give a blood-curdling shriek, so that the neighbors would gather about the gate and finally, gathering courage, rush in together, for the sound of blows and screams made them think the old man was beating his little wife to death. Instead of that, they'd find old Davenport with his hands defending his face,

while that tiny infuriated figure would spring into the air and bring a broom down on him with all the strength of her wiry little arms, with a shrill scream to accompany every blow.

Whether it was because of his fear of another such man-handler, or because he missed that lively little person so, he turned hermit after she died, and took out a homestead south of town. It's a high valley, hidden away in the hills, wonderfully fertile and with a much warmer season than we have in town. He grows things in his little world that can't be raised around here. It's a garden spot that you drop down into thru' a silver maze of aspens. All he lacks is a good water supply and that could easily be arranged with a little expenditure. Of course the old fellow is as poor and proud as they come."

I sighed. I had so wanted to buy that dream of a place. I had ridden upon it first from a wild rocky upland. A bluff ended my forward progress, I pushed my horse to the very edge to get a good look at the country. The bluff ended in perhaps one hundred and fifty feet of sheer rock. At it's foot stretched a little paradise valley of about forty cultivated acres, surrounded on two sides by rough rocky ridges and dark pine trees, and crescented about by rocky bluffs. Here were neat rows of cabbages, Indian corn waved in the light breeze and there were orderly rows of other vegetables. A few unpainted little buildings, made of old logging railroad ties, were grouped against the high rocks. A slight gray-whiskered old man, sort of an emaciated Santa Claus in looks, was driving a team in one field, such an odd team. One large bay horse that hobbled about with one hind foot almost useless—the poor animal had been given Davenport. The mate, a

tiny mare, not over fourteen hands, showing much age, but she was a bright yellow, almost the color of butter, and beautiful dappled. About her capered an awkward sorrel colt, nearly as tall as it's mother.

I had sat on my horse, watching that peaceful scene very quietly, and presently discovered a hen turkey and her brood, feeding among the wild rose bushes on the edge of the very field where the old man was working. I was unable to ascertain whether they belonged to the farm or the woods, they stood on the edge of both. Later, on visiting the little homestead, I found all game was plentiful about there, the old man hadn't much time for hunting.

"Davenport," continued Florian, "has lived there alone with only his different generations collies, 'his collar dogs' he calls them, for twelve or fourteen years. Some winters when the snows come early and are heavy, he is shut off from the world for months. Don't look so envious Frances, we'll never let you do it! If you should buy that place and go down there, we'd be sitting around his dirty little stove before you ever arrived with your piano, that mahogany clock and a dozen tooth brushes—that's not counting the live stock, they go without saying. Why did you buy a license for this big, black, stray dog? He looks like the very devil himself."

"Perhaps he is," I replied. "Julia and I were coming home from the pictures one inky night, that ill-behaving gasoline motor of the electric light plant had managed to last thru the show, then it gave a few gasps and left the town in spooky darkness. Old Jim, the boot maker, had just died, too much 'Boot-leg' whiskey they say, and as we passed his shop I wondered aloud to Julia whether the kind hearted fellow had had much

trouble getting past the Golden Gate. Just then a big black form arose from his doorstep, seeming to take shape from the shadows it appeared from. Julia and I gasped and involuntarily hurried on. It was this dog here, he dropped his head at my very heels and stayed there, whether we ran or walked or stood still. After throwing him some bread, which he ate with mournful dignity, I double-locked the door in his face. Next morning he was still at the threshold and he's been here ever since. But strange to say he had always answered to the name of Jim, I've tried others, but that's the only one he knows."

Jimmy rolled a blood-shot eye up at me when I mentioned him, and promptly finding he wasn't needed—went to sleep again.

"Tell us about Davenport and the rats," I urged Florian.

"Have you been inside his shack? Well it's no wonder there are rats, is it? And he himself wouldn't look half bad if he had a bath and a shave once in a while, and someone would buy him some new clothes and burn up those that he puts on till they're worn out."

"You sure ought to know what a difference clean clothes and getting cleaned up means, Florian," chuckled my Enigma.

"I do," answered the unabashed Florian, and continued. "Well, the trade rats came, they took—took mind you, for a trade rat is no thief, his tobacco and left him a nice couple of shiny little acorns. They took one sock, another night, leaving it's lonely mate. He had no others, he couldn't wear the neat little pine cone left in trade. Finally he did find the missing sock, it was caught by its supporter in the small opening where Mr. Rat had made his exit, he'd given the sock a vengeful

chewing before leaving it. I suppose that was to make the bargain more fair, as otherwise he would have to have returned for the pine cone. The old man grew much upset over all these deals, in which he was so little consulted. He set a trap and caught one large gray tormentor, who blinked knowingly at him from its cage before he threw it to his old 'collar dog,' who promptly let it escape. The very next morning he found they had invaded his one table during the night, where quite an assortment of odds and ends were spread about at random for their selection. They carefully chose his fork, spoon and knife. (I don't know how he ever ate without the latter) and left instead—well, excuse me, but what they left was what you always find stored up so carefully for future bargaining in their nests—three pieces of—of fertilizer. He thought they'd leave him in peace after a deal like that, but on visiting his potato cellar he was dismayed to find his neat piles of spuds all disarranged. He had placed them in four heaps, largest and best for high-priced market; medium, for medium trade; small, for his own use and little seed potatoes, each separate. Not that they were scattered about the place, nor that any of the piles had diminished or increased greatly, the invaders had simply traded a large for a small, or a medium or seedling, as they felt inclined, carefully, busily carrying a potato from one pile to another, and bringing one back in exchange. Poor Davenport! He was half inclined to think the rats were of as ghostly origin as this dog here. When I saw him last he was deeply engrossed in the consideration of different means of rat extermination. Poison might be harmful to the 'Collars' and the rats had avoided his traps of late with uncanny wisdom. In fact, he awakened one morning to find a trap resting on his

chest! Cruel, sarcastic, defiant trade rats! Davenport was praying for St. Patrick who would work the snake trick on these pests when I left him, but I told him what he needed was the Pied Piper of Hamelin.—Come on, let's make some coffee."

Florian is something of a coffee fiend. We two encouraged the fire about to die in the kitchen range and put on the percolator. It was very cold away from the hearth and we knew it must be freezing out.

When they finally left, the clock was striking midnight and I heard Florian's cheerful voice calling back: "What we need is skates, come on out, the ice is fine!"

III. The Oldest Speaks

My two flapper daughters were home from their respective boarding schools. How old they made me seem!

My Three Wise Friends had honored us with their company at Sunday dinner. A lawless chicken dinner it was,—lawless in this wise. The Enigma's brother, feeling young and frisky one evening, robbed, with the aid of his eighteen year old cousin, some neighboring hen roost of three fine chickens, looking forward to a chicken dinner the following Sunday.

There are several sayings suitable to the occasion, "Slips between cups and lips," "Man proposes," etc.,

etc., anyhow the Enigma came home Saturday, comprehended the situation and—Caesar like—confiscated the chickens, which he generously presented to me. I can claim neither innocence nor ignorance in the matter, except that, not knowing to whom the chickens originally belonged, it was impossible for me to return them to their lawful owner. The colored lady who so capably officiates at any of my culinary affairs of state, cooked us a very enjoyable meal. Everything was delicious, the chickens supremely so, (of course, “Stolen fruits”—you know the rest) but her biscuits, coffee and lemon pie deserve special mention, too, and how enjoyable to sit down afterwards with never a dish to wash!

My younger daughter, looking very charming in a black satin frock, black to conform with the regulations of her school, seated herself on the sofa with the Enigma in tow, and purred to him softly, about—herself, which absorbing topic seemed to interest him deeply, though he flashed an occasional glance at me, his blue eyes expressive of enjoyable amusement.

My elder, my Jewel, sat on the piano bench, and swapped school day experiences with Florian, which caused them both much healthy glee.

The oldest of the three turned to me, “We old people,” said he laughing, “had better settle down by the fire-side.” So we drew two big chairs close to the pleasant blaze.

The early winter twilight, the “young people’s” laughing voices, the cheerful, tho’ faint, clatter of dishes in the kitchen, all combined to make me feel relaxed and drowsy, and I studied my companion in silence for a while, as he watched the dancing flames.

Florian is my twin, the Enigma is a year younger,

this man is ten years older than any of us. He does not reside here, but business makes him a frequent visitor, and he has been a friend to me and mine ever since our arrival in this country. He is a man rather above the average height, very slight, very erect, full of an unquenchable nervous energy. His hair is black and beautifully silvered, his wide-set eyes that indefinable color that makes one wonder whether they are really gray, or brown. He has laughed at obstacles and climbed steadily, being now a successfully self-made man. In spite of the extra years, he is often more full of fun and life than any of us. As I noted these things my friend twirled a pencil absently, and a little smile twitched at his lips.

"Let's have it, Doctor," said I, sensing a story as my hound scents game.

He handed me the pencil, on which was printed a name unknown to me. "Tell me about him," I urged, returning the pencil. "It's really nothing" he answered, "Just one of those incidents life is so full of. I'll tell you about it if you wish."

I wished.

"Lots of people hang around my office, I don't have time to pay much attention to them. But one ragged fellow of the profession I used to practise, hung about so persistently—tho' he was never an annoyance, that I finally grew to look for him. Sometimes he'd come every day, and stay for hours, reading my books, and talking with me whenever I could spare the time. Other times, weeks would go by without my seeing him, till I almost forgot he existed, then he'd show up again, looking more haggard and tattered than before.

"I liked to talk with him. He was a man with a wonderfully keen intellect, his knowledge of bacteriology,

in which he kept informed up to date, would have outdone many a man respected in the profession. I supposed he was addicted to the use of some drug, and subsequent events proved that to be the case. He had a little office in a rickety old building, but if he practiced at all it was very seldom.

"I was able to do him a few little favors and he was childishly grateful for anything of the sort, tho' he was proud and wouldn't tolerate anything that savored of charity.

"Where he came from, or anything of his past I never knew, but he impressed me as a man who is trying to forget something; tho' on several occasions he spoke tenderly of 'his children.'

"One day after a long absence on his part—it was during the influenza epidemic—I received a shakily written note from him saying he had been very ill. I managed to break away from work long enough to look him up and finally located his rooms at the top of a dingy building. Inside I heard a strange racket, a scraping and scurrying, strange sounds of voices like the gibbering of insane children. At my knock the sounds ceased and a weak voice bade me enter. I opened the door into the wildest confusion and disorder I've ever beheld. There were two rooms opening into each other. The first might have been considered the office, the second, scarcely larger than a closet, was his bedroom. A whirlwind of papers and books covered the table, the floor, and the two straight chairs in the front room. Papers in shreds, book leaves torn out and evidently chewed. The few pictures on the walls were twisted at odd angles, the calendars torn, dirty window curtains hung in pieces and the shades had been dragged down entirely and lay about the floor with the papers. I

stood still in amazement and only picked my way thru the debris when I spied my poor acquaintance, pale and woefully untidy, lying on a rickety cot in the little room beyond.

“‘My children,’ he gasped in weak apology, ‘are a bit untidy.’ Not until he spoke did I perceive one, two and then three large monkeys that peered at me from different hiding places. Under the bed, behind the door and one in the corner, holding a newspaper in front of him, from behind which he peered at me like an annoyed grandfather.

“Positively the whole thing startled me.

“It required some tactful maneuvering on my part, but I finally managed to get the place straightened up a little and my man cared for until his strength returned. After which, properly clothed and fed, I found him some congenial employment. I was never successful, however, in persuading him to part with his obnoxious, but beloved children.

“One day he came to me with tears in his eyes and begged me to advise him in a matter over which he was deeply concerned. He had an offer to exchange one of his monkeys for a good folding bed, he needed the bed badly and would still have two monkeys left, but it wrenched his heart to part with one of his pets and for a mere unsympathetic piece of furniture. Of course I encouraged the trade, and he finally took my advice, but I could see he never felt quite right about it.

“A few weeks later the authorities notified me that the poor fellow was dead.

“The police, called in by a boy who now came to clean his rooms daily, found him dead in the newly acquired bed. One monkey was perched on the wooden top, chattering excitedly, the other crouched miserably be-

side his dead master, patting the still form gently. Whether he died of an accidental overdose of his habitual drug, or whether he deliberately took more than he could stand, was never fully ascertained. Circumstances seem to point more strongly to the latter end, however, for on top of a pile of books, as far out of reach of mischievous monkey hands as possible, was an open note addressed to me. In it he stated briefly that he left me all his worldly belongings, which consisted of a mass of torn valueless papers and books, his few pieces of furniture, a large box of these pencils, and, of course, the monkeys, which he begged me to treat kindly.

"I kept the pencils as a reminder of him, but didn't feel I could do the same with the monkeys, and really think they are spending their happiest days in a huge cage at the Zoological Park with many more of their brethren."

The Wise Man finished this little story just in time, for the four "kids" came to claim the fireside, about which they grouped themselves, seated on sofa cushions and armed with popcorn and popcorn roaster, also a box of marshmallows and long wires to toast them on. "Children are always eating," condescended our oldest Wise Man with a twinkle in his eyes, as he and I pushed our chairs back out of the way. "Didn't you have enough dinner?" I queried, with mock indignation. "Why, mama, dinner was two hours ago!" exclaimed my Jewel, "besides this is such fun, come and join us, you two old people!" And to quote the country locals: "We done it and it sure was!"

Samson and the Trapper

The woods are my habit, my cure for all ailments, they have become almost a necessity to me. As the drug fiend longs for his "dope," so do I grow restless and at odds with the world if I can't get off to those still wide spaces occasionally. If its only an hour I can spare from the day's work, why off I ride to the nearest woodland and return refreshed and calm, better able to cope with the worries of every day life.

There are such a variety of Indian ruins, caves and other interesting places to visit hereabouts, I've never seen them all and perhaps I never will. Hunting, that is shooting, is only part of these outings, but if I take a gun along I have to have a companion, as I am no longer able to shoot and the inclination to do so has largely passed with the ability. Still, for my eager hound's sake, I often arrange a hunt. How he does dance about when I come out of the house with a gun and thrust it into the leather scabbard that hangs on my saddle! I hunted on Saturdays and Sundays all summer and fall, with one or another obliging friend, who didn't object to some excess baggage—meaning me—trailing along.

In hunting, the usual question to arise is: "Which shall we try, the pines or the cedars?" If I'm sure it is agreeable to my partners, I usually speak for the pines. The cedars are fascinating, beyond doubt. More deer and antelope range there, more old Indian signs

abound. And the cedars are easier to ride, away from the mountains the canyons are less steep, the rabbits, too, both jack and cottontail, are more plentiful. But the pines, the tall dark pines, have always drawn me most. They cluster about the mountain, on the side of which are also firs and glades of thick growing aspens, that choose the damp springy spots, and there are many groups of small oaks, too. The mountains seem to hold more mystery, tho' all this country is fascinatingly full of it. The cat and coyote lurk in both the pines and the cedars, but the lion and bear have their home in the former, therefore the chance of seeing big game is always better there. Pine squirrels are thick there—to the dog's delight—and funny porcupines are plentiful, too, rolling themselves into balls that look much like round bunches of pine needles in the tall trees. There are deer, too, the smaller white-tailed variety and sometimes a silvery little antelope, tho' he prefers the flatter country. Bruins, black and brown are by no means strangers about the mountains and an occasional silver-tip passes thru. I am having a splendid cinnamon hide mounted at the time of this writing. Then I have been delighted more than once to hear the turkeys calling in the woods, sometimes the gobblers, sometimes the piping of the hens. I have seen two splendid flocks of these birds and several small groups, their red heads bobbing, their feathers glistening. Once a large tawny lion rose from among a clump of ferns, turned brown and red by frost, and stalked solemnly across the road and off into the green and gold forest.

My favorite hunting country was known by the name of an old abandoned ranch, fourteen miles from town. To get there one follows a dirt road in poor condition that climbs and climbs, close to the mountain, until a

large shallow lake is reached, which abounds in wild ducks of many varieties. On account of the size of the lake and the open shore about it, no one has ever had any success hunting there, to speak of. The ducks either fly before one is within gun shot, or swim out of reach. Still we always stop and have a try at them. After leaving the lake the road drops down for several miles, passes thru quite an oak grove, where the wild pigeons delight to feed, then beside half a mile of fenced grain fields, that are planted every year by one of the big cattle outfits, and comes to a number of large barns and corrals in fair shape, and a little broken down house, with a big outside chimney at one side, built of rough stones, the whole little house sinking under the weight of a huge Virginia creeper vine that affords a cool green shade within in summer time.

As I drew up my team before driving thru the ditch and creek that lead to this ranch gate, one day last September, I was surprised to observe a stream of blue smoke pouring from the little kitchen chimney. A yellow dog rushed out barking an eager welcome and presently a man's figure appeared at the back door, shaded his eyes with his hand while looking at us and then hobbled stiffly but very quickly to meet us, as my hunting partner of the day swung wide the long gate and I drove the team thru.

Such a strange little man it was! Perhaps seventy years old, but spry and chipper as a robin. His head was quite bald on top, but fringed with snow white hair, that matched his heavy moustache. His eyes, bright as a bird's, were protruding and very light blue. He seemed pleasant and hospitable, but, wonder of wonders for one alone in the woods, he was scrupulously clean!

"Come in, come in," he urged, "dinner's just ready,"

and eagerly, "have you a daily paper with you?"

We hadn't, I felt so sorry, but had never dreamed of finding any one living in the little shack, which had always been such a dirty mouse-ridden place that we never entered it, except sometimes to make gingerly some coffee on the rusty stove.

What a surprise when we stepped inside! I looked about the kitchen, silent with amazement, then slowly inspected the living room and tiny bed room, with the little man hobbling briskly after me. The place was really liveable. I found my tongue and complimented him heartily on the wonders a broom, soap, water and hard work can accomplish, which seemed to please him greatly. The floors were scrubbed, the windows washed, his bedding neatly arranged on an old rickety bed frame. The big stone fireplace was brushed up into a state of rough beauty. Every old piece of furniture, touched by the magic of soap and water, stood out as an individual article, instead of part of an indiscriminate whole. There were no chairs, but an inverted packing box makes a good seat if you don't insist on rocking or leaning back.

I had brought sandwiches, eggs, olives and a cake, for lunch. These we added to our host's fresh beef, biscuits and coffee. I think each enjoyed the other's fare best. He told us he was a trapper, making a specialty of wolves, one doing great damage hereabouts being what had brought him to the little ranch. He had already trapped a lioness and found her four kittens—he pointed to them all, tacked on the wall. How my heart ached for those pitiful out-stretched tiny skins, silky and spotted like leopards! If I only could have had one alive. But of course each kitten that lives makes a destructive lion some day and brings as big a bounty

dead as a grown animal.

In one of the corrals the old man showed us a colt he had trapped. There are many wild horses in this country—they would come into the corrals for salt, and he had rigged up a wire at the house by means of which he could close the gates. This was a beautiful little animal, jet black and shy as a deer. He told us where the game had been feeding and all the news of his little trapping world—and asked eagerly of the events of the day, scolding his dog at intervals, as he pawed us with joyful persistence. My companion thought he called the dog "Critter." I thought he called him "Triller." We were both wrong, his name was "Trailer." He was the trapper's constant companion and in his estimation that dog was a marvel. He sure was a marvelous mixture of different canine species.

I promised the old man I would return the next Sunday, fortified with papers and periodicals.

That was the beginning of many week-end visits to the little ranch. With my daughter, or some reliable friend, I would leave home on Saturday afternoons, get a good evening's hunt in that excellent game district and hunt again in the early morning.

The little bedroom was always at my disposal and I was treated with the respect and courtesy due a queen. I always brought the latest papers and magazines with me, fresh fruits and other acceptable eatables. With the early fall came chill nights, when we grouped about the big hearth on our packing boxes and talked on all sorts of subjects. The old trapper was well educated. He came originally from the state and town of my mother's people, had known of my grandfather. He was a student of theosophy and learned in other cults. I listened and wondered if I might have stumbled on

one of those super-men the theosophists tell of, so I duly worshipped at his shrine. Yet there were times when it seemed as if a look of sickly sentiment flickered in his pale protruding eyes as they rested on me, but I put such thoughts aside as unworthy conceited fancies of mine.

Then came the harvest season—and Samson.

In all the world I believe there is only one Samson, yet at the thought of adequately describing him, I am dismayed. He had come down to the little ranch to put up the oat crop and I saw him first working in the yellow fields, tossing hay as nonchalantly as most men smoke cigarettes. He was tall and splendidly formed, as supple and powerful as a man can be. He wore khaki clothes, considerably worn and torn, had an automatic revolver strapped about his waist and beneath his big sombrero was wonderful wavy chestnut hair, that he wore most outrageously long.

The trapper welcomed us with his usual enthusiasm and apologized for the fact that some one else was at the ranch—the harvester.

“I don’t know whether you’ll like him,” he said doubtfully. “He’s a strange fellow, something of a genius and a confirmed woman-hater.”

Here promised a new and interesting study!

We were delayed in returning to the little cabin, “Roamer,” the hound, took the trail of a large lion track and we followed him until dark, when we were forced to return to camp without him. He didn’t come back till midnight and couldn’t tell us, poor fellow, how long he may have held that big cat treed for us.

It was dark when we sighted the cabin. The trapper stood in the lighted kitchen doorway, peering into the night and seemed relieved when we hailed him.

Samson was seated by the fire and rose politely to greet us. At the trapper's formal introduction I shook his rough but well shaped hand. He was courteous, but indifferent. I was surprised at his slow Southern accent, and as he finally warmed up and talked a little I found he came from North Carolina. His rare smiles were a delight as they showed perfectly shaped white teeth—here was a man who certainly didn't "chew," but he rolled and smoked cigarettes. His table manners were good, too, which was a blessing. More than once at a ranch or roundup, I've had to "think of sweet lillies" to enable me to finish my dinner on account of some unintentional break of table etiquette about me.

The trapper seemed annoyed at my interest in Samson, which I don't think was too obvious, but I had dwelt too much on the old fellow's own words and he missed not being the whole centre of attraction. This very much amused my two companions. I had a friend from Phoenix with me as well as one of my usual escorts, on this occasion. They liked the old fellow, too, but had not idealized him as I had. It is a fault I acknowledge and has caused me much disillusionment and much joy too.

That night was cold and we lingered long by the fire. Next morning there was ice to break on the pail where the washing water is kept. One washes there on a little shelf outside the door, then rushes to the stove with face buried in a turkish towel—at least I do.

We ran into three gobblers that morning, their red heads bobbing above the edge of a ridge. They weren't at all alarmed until the shooting began, then they sailed across a little canyon, landing near the bottom and hurried up out of it and away, their legs working with the speed and stiffness of mechanical toys. It was my fault

we didn't get at least one of them. I carried the only shotgun and was doing a little independent hunting of my own. My two companions each had rifles, and they hailed me, but by the time I came up the turkeys were out of range. However, the trappers picked up a dead turkey near there next day, so one of the rifle shots had gone true.

We returned to camp and found dinner waiting, but it consisted mostly of what I had brought down—cold broiled chicken this time, as the camp was out of meat. Samson and the trapper had both indulged in a shave. I couldn't help but wonder how the former would look in a dress suit—he was very ragged then. After dinner Samson picked up a gun saying he guessed he'd try his luck, as camp was out of meat. He disappeared with that easy swinging gait of the country people of the South, and I wished I were going with him. The day was like a perfect jewel, and the "camp robbers" those daring gray magpies, squawked a challenge on the very door sill, but the trapper was holding forth about a wonderful dream he had had in Old Mexico, in which the exact hiding place of the gold of the Incas was revealed to him. This he declared nothing would induce him to touch, for in his dream a noble Indian had guided him to the spot—which he knew of in his conscious hours,—and turning to him had said majestically, "Not for you, white man, not for you!" It was all very thrilling, but a shot outside brought us to our feet and out of the door, all except the old trapper, who continued to smoke and ponder by the fire.

Still within sight of camp Sampson had shot a big badger. We had hunted for hours and seen nothing more than a couple of squirrels, while he five minutes out of camp had found something of interest. He

casually turned it over with his foot as we came up and "reckoned he'd go along." One of my companions had been hunting with Samson and spoke of his wonderfully keen eyesight. He had pointed out deer to him standing in the bush, where for a long time my companion could discern nothing. Samson gave him the first shot and then laughed good-naturedly when my friend's dog flushed the deer (there were a large bunch of them) like a flock of quail. But there was need of meat now and he would not be apt to lose any good chances of killing game.

Half an hour later as we were preparing to return to town, we heard a call from the rocks above the house. It was Samson. "Lock up the dogs," he called, "I'm bringing something in." The dogs safely shut in the house, we turned to see Samson above us, his gun cradled loosely in his right arm, with his left (for Samson was what the baseball fans call a "southpaw"), he threw an occasional stone to head off or turn something he was driving before him, which he also encouraged with low whistles and calls. At first I couldn't see what he had, but finally discovered two sheep, the color of the rocks, advancing in shy, halting jerks.

"Mutton," called the trapper, excitedly jumping about. If the sheep tried to break to the right a stone thrown in front of them would turn them, the same for the left or too far ahead. Easily, leisurely Samson drove his sheep down the steep slope. We all helped drive the two strays (for of course they weren't mountain sheep) into the corral, and the trapper shut the gate upon them with as much triumphant glee as if he had accomplished the whole difficult feat himself. Stray sheep become very wild; one's natural impulse is to shoot them; I know that from experience, but Samson

realized that he'd have to pack it home on foot from wherever he shot it, as the rocks were too steep for even the burros to climb, so, keeping his head in spite of the need of fresh meat, he drove them in alone. He rolled and lit a cigarette laughingly, as we poured questions at him, and admitted he had thought they were mountain sheep when he first saw them standing on a rocky ledge. When we left the ranch I promised to bring down all the trimmings for a roast of mutton the following Saturday, but——

Well, the next Saturday I packed the little wagon tight with good things, pies, rolls, fresh vegetables, celery in a big paper bag, jellies, a bottle of mint sauce, eggs and fruit, half a sack of oats for the horses and enough papers and magazines to start a young news stand.

Without any desire to boast, I have the fastest road team around. One is the best looking horse in town, the other notably the toughest. As the handsome one is as tough as the average horse and the tough one as handsome, you can see I have a good combination. This day they started full of oats and good spirits. Roamer treed a squirrel about eight miles from town. A squirrel isn't much account, but to bring one down breaks the monotony of a long trip. I had with me a young cattleman, a splendid boy lately returned from overseas. He climbed out to shoot the squirrel for the eager dogs. The hound was barking "treed," nose pointing upward; the little fox terrier stood alert and whined with excitement, his tail beating the air furiously. These squirrels can give a perfect imitation of a pine cone, a limb, or just space, and as my companion looked for something to shoot at, I, as interested as the dogs, left the horses to circle around the

tree, nose in air, like the hound. Before we ever located the squirrel or raised the gun, our horses started and were soon tearing down the narrow, rocky hill at a wild pace that they seemed to enjoy keenly. We all turned to watch them but the hound, who still held to the squirrel in the tree. I sat down on a rock in mournful silence, while my friend swore softly. At the first bump a bag of apples sailed out, scattering about promiscuously, then a steady stream of papers soared behind. A pie went this way, a pie went that. Eggs spattered about the road. Here the rain of food ended in one grand cloudburst, for the team met a tree, their ideas of which side to pass it on differed and with an awful smash that telescoped the wagon, sending up a volcanic and miscellaneous burst of eatables, they parted company with each other, the wagon, the pole and the harness.

We marched sadly towards the wreck, I picking up scattered goods as I went, till I was laden down like a pack horse. When we came to the pies I sat down by the remains of the pumpkin—which has always been a favorite of mine—while my companion, finding the mince on the opposite side, did likewise. As we ate we talked things over from across the road. He was for walking ahead two miles, where there was a telephone and getting his cousin to come out in the machine and take us home. I was all for catching the horses and pushing on. Disappoint that roast of mutton? Never! Here I took a large mouthful of mangled pie and he gave his ideas that it was impossible to push on, no saddles even if we caught the horses. How could we carry everything? Guns, literature, provisions? Nonsense, it was impossible! (Mince pie consumed in large quantities while I take

up the debate.) Be ignominiously defeated by a mere trifling accident? Never! I would not! Each one, with a large mouthful of pie, glared fiercely across the road at the other. Then the ridiculous side of it came to me. I swallowed my mouthful of pie hastily and laughed and laughed till I ached and wept. Thru my tears I saw the horror and indignation in my companion's face over my misplaced mirth. His expression only made me worse, then my tidal wave of laughter caught him too and he was entirely engulfed in it.

When we had recovered our composure we arose and following a trail of broken harness, some of which we found worth recovering, we came upon a peaceful scene. A beautiful sorrel horse lay under a tree, his eyes closed in peaceful equine slumber, beside him with drooping head, stood a big bay horse, his eyes also closed. They awoke and gazed at us in mild surprise, meekly submitting themselves to be decorated with bits of harness, rope and string, after which we led them back to the wreck. They looked mournfully at the scattered oats, and snatched mouthfuls of them on every possible occasion. The wagon was quite beyond present repair, and as the bay horse refused to be loaded with cans, baskets, bags and guns, my pet sorrel had to pack the paraphernalia, minus the guns, and me too. I was forced to discard all the literature, but packed other things on with every conceivable design I could contrive, most of which my companion ruthlessly discarded. Finally, riding our runaways bareback, without bits and with little makeshift rope halters, we started on the last six miles to the ranch. Perched on my horse, I was surrounded with all manner of things that jingled and bumped like a junk man and dropped in a little trail along the road. My com-

panion on the bay horse, who was inclined to buck at this bareback riding, held a gun in each hand and his reins in spare fingers and his teeth. His pockets bulged and so did mine. My hunting coat was weighted down and unshapely with all manner of things from buns to ammunition. I was especially solicitous about a bunch of celery which I knew would be very acceptable to the old trapper. I stuffed it, bag and all, into an upper coat pocket. It tickled my ear and my nose and stuck into my eyes, then, being considerably longer than the pocket, fell out. Three times my companion climbed down from his restless horse, a gun in each hand, risking life and limb to rescue that celery. The fourth time it fell I turned towards him to speak of it, but he had already seen it drop. "I hate celery!" he burst out, hotly, so we left it by the roadside where it fell, its inquisitive head protruding from the paper bag; and there its remains still lie, shriveled and battered, but quite recognizable, an unnecessary reminder of that eventful day. I hadn't ridden without a saddle in years and our road on leaving the duck-spotted lake (the ducks didn't draw a shot that trip) was all down hill, which is hard on a bareback rider. My companion would rest his aching limbs by walking occasionally, but I had cans of eatables and other contrivances tied about me that made walking impossible. In spite of all drawbacks, we finally reached the little shack. The trapper met us at the gate and Samson came from the house. I had never seen the latter laugh much before, but with gasping apologies, he certainly laughed at me as he lifted me, bags, cans, jelly glasses and all, from my horse and carried us all into the house, for my poor cramped limbs crumpled under me and refused to help me out.

We didn't hunt much that trip. The old man had trapped a huge lobo and we spent some time admiring the thick, golden, streaked hide; it was by far the largest and most beautiful skin I have ever seen. Samson rustled me a saddle for the return trip, but my poor companion rode home those sixteen miles bareback, which is some stunt! But he is some boy and took his discomfort as a joke.

* * * * *

Then someone poisoned my little "Spotty-dog," who had been my constant companion for seven long years, and the world went black to me. It was the night I returned from the trip just described, tired out and longing for a good sleep. My hound was late coming in, tho he'd been with us up to the time we struck town; he came in shaking all over, and dragging his hind legs. I recognized his symptoms as strychnine or arsenic poisoning at once, but he had had the poison for possibly a half hour and his chances of recovery were slim. I worked with him all night long; he had one terrible convulsion after the other, sometimes with body rigid, toe nails extended and glassy eyes bulging from their sockets he would stop breathing entirely, but always came the panting recovery. Little Spotty sat on the floor beside me all night, watching and worrying too and often placing his little lame front foot questioningly on my arm. At six next morning the hound's convulsions grew milder and less frequent and I felt he was out of danger. I climbed wearily to bed, my little fox terrier slept with his head on my arm. My sleep was so sound that I failed to hear the colored choreman come. He, knowing nothing of the danger, let Spotty out. A few hours later I arose and started to get some breakfast, when on the back porch I heard my

little dog. I could tell by the stiff wooden sound of his footsteps that he had been poisoned. He came right up to me trying to wag his tail. I picked him up, but he died almost immediately in my arms, his jaws closing tight on my hand as I tried to administer an emetic. I carry the scars yet of his sharp little teeth; it took all the colored man's powerful strength to force those little jaws, locked in death, apart.

Worn out from the strain and lack of rest, heart-sick and bewildered by my sudden loss, I ordered my bay horse, and leaving the helpless hound in care of the colored man, I rode blindly, swiftly away,—anywhere but away from the sickening atmosphere of those who poison by stealth in the dark. It must have been early afternoon when I left; habit or my horse, who is sure-footed and fleet, took me down towards the little ranch. It was some time before I fully realized where we were headed for; my chief desire was to go and go. I remember urging my horse on whenever he slackened his pace. The quiet of the forest only began its healing work when we reached the lake. I slowed my horse to a walk; he was black with sweat and breathing hard, for we had come many miles at a rapid pace and all upgrade. The lake was very blue, some of the weeds in it were still a vivid green. I turned to look at the beautiful San Francisco peaks, which show splendidly from there; they glittered with snow in the dazzling sunshine. This was God's world, and I was at peace with it. On the road from the lake down the comfort of the beautiful woods stole into my heart and helped heal the ache there.

It had been windy when I left town, but the wind was quiet now, and the slanting rays of the setting sun were warm and golden. The sky was cloudless, the

pure air a delight to breathe, Heaven was reflected on earth in these beautiful woods. As I passed under a clump of oak trees laden with acorns a flock of blue-gray wood pigeons that had been feeding there flew off with rattling wings. Two squirrels played in and out among the pines, far off I heard the shrill cry of a hawk, a little note of warning in this perfect peace. Silver spider webs hung from the trees and drifted lazily thru the still air, and a flock of robins feeding busily by the road let me pass almost unnoticed. Before I realized it I was singing, which is something of a habit of mine at all times. I came in sight of the first field stacked with yellow grain, and, still singing, covered the last half mile at a walk. Soon the peaceful little cabin came in view, blue smoke rose steadily from its kitchen chimney, undisturbed by a breath of air. The Virginia creeper had changed color since my last visit and hung like a gorgeous red robe over the gray logs. On the roof sat a rock squirrel, eating a nut and snapping his tail. A line of cows and calves filed slowly into the corral, looking for salt. Far off a bull bellowed and still more faintly came an answering challenge.

Everything seemed so peaceful, so far removed from the world, that I almost wept and began to realize how utterly exhausted I was from lack of sleep, the nervous strain I had been under and a fast of over twenty-four hours. The old trapper must have heard me singing, for he stood by the gate, which he held wide open, calling "Welcome, welcome," while the energetic Trailer rushed to meet me, delighted to be unchecked by the usual growling formalities of my dogs.

"Alone?" queried the old man in a cracked voice.

"Yes, and without even a daily paper," I answered.

"You've come alone to see me?" he quavered, trying to assist me to dismount. I turned to him in surprise, and explained the reason for my unexpected visit, which, I added, I hoped he would not misunderstand. But he only repeated vaguely with a fatuous look in his fishlike eyes, "So you've come to me!"

I noticed for the first time that under his snow-white moustache his mouth was loose-lipped and cruel, his receding chin, bald head and beak-like nose gave him the aspect of a bird of prey, and in my unstrung condition, positively terrified me. Ordinarily I might have handled the situation with a little well-placed sarcasm, but now I felt dizzy, ready to faint, and entirely unable to undertake the return trip that evening. The peace of that little spot was shattered; it was a dangerous spot now, a prison island, surrounded by a hopeless sea of weariness and darkness.

The old man made a pretense of busying himself with some savory venison that was frying on the stove, while I warmed myself at the big fireplace, my back to the kitchen, standing there with my elbow on the blackened stone mantel, buried deep in disillusionments, in disgust with mankind. I did not hear the trapper, who entered stealthily as a cat, and I was very much startled when he threw both arms violently about me. I nearly fainted and clutched at the mantel with my left hand to steady myself and break away from that disgusting embrace. My fingers touched and then closed on cold metal, and I swung my hand into the firelight with Samson's big black automatic held tightly in it.

There was no dramatic scene, no necessity for me to point that blue-black, murderous weapon at a man older than my father. He wisely stepped back and I

asked in a voice I tried to make calm and steady: "Where is he?" "Feeding the stock," he answered.

I laid the automatic down quietly and walked out of the door. It was dark. Approaching the corrals I saw a lantern gleaming and heard Samson's cheerful voice talking to his mules. I held onto the bars of the corral for a minute and tried to keep back the hot tears that rolled slowly down my cheeks. I was alone and utterly exhausted. I had fancied I would always be safe with the trapper, but now! Near me stood the big stranger, an Unknown Quantity, but my only hope, and my instincts told me not a vain one. I dried my tears and straightened up. Calling him by name, I stepped into the little circle of lantern light.

"Howdy," said he cheerfully, "I was in the far field when you came, but I heard you singing." I tried to answer him casually, but miserably, utterly failed, and burying my face on my bent arm I burst into tears, which must have amazed poor Samson. Anyhow, he was a real fellow. A few tactful questions from him brought out my tale of woe. He gave just enough sympathy to steady and soothe me and when I had quieted down he said, "Now you brace up and go back in the house as if nothing had happened; I'll come in directly and see that everything is all right." I started to go, but turned back to him in a panic. "Promise me, please promise me you won't leave me alone with him, not for a minute," I implored.

He took both my hands in his and answered slowly, "I will not leave you."

I found the old man setting the table for supper and started to help him, as usual, to which he protested with fond solicitude. As I came from the stove with my hands full of biscuits and venison, he put his arm

around me, and as I hesitated between dropping the food or throwing it at him, a quiet voice drawled from the door:

"Supper all ready?" It was Samson. His absence had already been too prolonged, but in no way did he betray what had passed between us, and a fear grew on me that he might have doubted me, have thought my accusation against the trapper a foolish mistake. I need not have worried. Samson's part was not an easy one to play, but he did it well. He was by nature respectful to older people, as well as chivalrous towards women. As time passed the old man invented all sorts of excuses to get rid of him. There was this or that to see to outside, different things hadn't been done, he had better ride to a nearby ranch where there was a telephone and order some supplies they were out of. Samson politely and respectfully refused to budge, usually giving some plausible reason for not doing so, and was never far from my side. My eyes were heavy with sleep, but I feared to move from the firelight. Samson must have noticed this, for he professed to be very tired, rolled down his camp bed and, with an apology, lit the only lamp and placed it in the little bedroom for me. At the canvas curtain, which was all that divided the two rooms, I wished them both good-night, and kicking off my riding boots, crawled into my own camp bedding, which I had brought down weeks before. I thought sleep would bless me with its presence at once, but was disappointed. Coyotes wailed dismally. I lay listening with nerves on edge. A psychic sense told me of the dangerous evil in the trapper's heart; he was very restless and rose to stir the fire often. I feared what he might attempt when Samson slept, but Samson was awake, for hour after hour I

would hear him strike a match and smell the smoke of his cigarette, and I knew he watched. Once there was a long pause, and I felt sure my protector slept. Then I caught the sound of stealthy steps approaching the doorway. My heart choked me; I tried to scream but could make no sound. The canvas curtain was moved by a hand outside, then a quiet voice spoke, "Wake up, Mr. —," it said, "you're walking in your sleep, I reckon." O, my blessed Samson!

The trapper muttered something and everything became still. A feeling of safety and calmness came over me and I sank into a deep dreamless sleep.

I awoke early to find a beautiful morning had wakened ahead of me. Someone was cooking breakfast and I slipped out of the front door and washed vigorously in the icy water before presenting myself in the kitchen where Samson stood by the kitchen cupboard, well powdered with flour, making biscuits.

The old trapper had left very early to make the rounds of his traps. Neither of us mentioned the events of the night before, but when he brought up my horse, saddled and ready for the return trip, I held out my hand.

"Thank you," I said, "for all you've done. I hope you will stop to see me when next you come to town."

He shook my hand and said he would come.

"Will you go to the pictures with me?" he asked.

"Not unless you get a haircut," I answered frankly, and we both laughed.

On that ride home I stored up enough strength and peace from the forest to meet life calmly and view my recent experience as part of the sum total that life is composed of.

The hound kept me well occupied for a few days;

he was very weak and shaky, needing lots of care. I had to urge him to take little mournful walks, which his sore and shaking limbs found very difficult.

Some time after my adventure just related, Samson telephoned and asked if he might call that evening. I invited him to dinner, and he consented rather hesitatingly to come. My young daughter was spending her Thanksgiving vacation with me and my friend of the runaway accident was also to dine with us. I warned my child to expect a wild man who had done me a favor and to be very polite to him, overlooking any little discrepancies on his part. Well—there weren't any to overlook!

A gentleman in a well-fitting English suit knocked at my door. His hair was close cut, but thick and chestnut colored. I hesitated before recognizing my Samson of the wilds. His manners were assured and he paid devoted attention to my daughter, till her yellow head was completely turned. I found him well acquainted with New York, where his brother is a man of some importance.

Samson himself, I learned, had lost a lot of money in that gamble of gambles—sheep, and is now recuperating his fortunes. And I! Don't you remember how Samson of old lost his strength when shorn of his wonderful locks? Well, I longed for the rough Samson with his mane of beautiful hair, dressed in torn khakis, who tossed the golden grain in the fields, an Unknown and yet Trusted Quantity.

January, 1920.

The Sweetheart Mine

CHAPTER I.

My horse had wandered some distance from me, grazing eagerly on the short clover that grew green and fresh on both sides of the sparkling brook, in the still eddies of which I had been hunting frogs' eggs. I placed the eggs in a carefully rinsed out ketchup bottle discarded by some camper, intending to take them home and watch their interesting development. Now I rested under one of the magnificent pine trees that stood, each in a pool of black shade, where their thick, discarded needles formed a comfortable reclining place. The weather was of Heaven's own brand. There was from where I lay a close-up view of Bill Williams Mountain, outlined against a cloudless Arizona-blue sky, white, where the snow still lay deep, and well sprinkled with the dark green of fir and pine. The small oaks and aspens still remained in stark, gray, uncompromising groups, unbending as yet at their superior altitude to the allurements of May, tho the warmth of the sunshine and buzzing of bees about me spoke clearly of coming summer. My dogs lay in the sun, snapping at stray flies. It was their sudden alertness that drew my attention towards a rider coming down the clover padded slope. The black dog rose to his huge height and growled a customary warning, while the hound watched the approach in non-committal silence. Thus enters the Handsome Villain. As

the rider drew closer I recognized Bert. Who else looked so slim, long-legged and graceful in the saddle? He had seen my well known running colt, Billy, noticeable for his beautiful sorrel coloring, with flax mane and tail. Billy threw up his head and snorted at the approach of the other horse. Bert looked about, and I rather hoped he wouldn't notice me, so I kept very still in the black shade of the pine, but by the quick, decisive way he turned his horse directly down the watercourse I knew I had been discovered, and rose as he cantered towards me, the horse dashing silver spray about them both.

Bert was a broad-shouldered, fine featured Mormon, over six feet tall, with yellow hair and very light eyes. This story, by the way, might be entitled "A Study in Blondes" if it weren't for a more important issue, because I am describing every one as they actually are, and it so happens that all the principal characters and myself are decided blondes.

Regular features, however, do not always make a pleasant face. In Bert's case they were quite spoiled by his overbearing cruel expression. He was known as a hard horseman and a bully. The latter characteristic he strongly displayed towards a woman some called his wife, whose past, best forgotten, he took pains to keep ever before her. Needless to say, his marked attentions to me were entirely unsolicited and most annoying, but my distaste of him, which I took no pains to hide, seemed to make him more persistent.

I had risen and started towards my horse, carrying the bottle full of the black dot-like frogs' eggs, when he overtook me, springing to the bank beside me and dropping the reins over his horse's head. "How are you?" he asked, lifting his sombrero, "starting an

aquarium?" I told him that I wished to get my embryo frogs home as soon as possible. "Stay and talk to me a few minutes," he asked. "I've just ridden in from the Double V's, looked around for you and heard you'd headed up the canyon. I followed your horse's tracks when you left the road, and so found you. Sit here a few moments, I want to tell you something." He took the ketchup bottle, which, rather than have jerked about, I yielded to him reluctantly, and placed it on a rock. "Bert, I have to get home," said I coldly. His manner changed and the pupils of his eyes contracted until they made me think of two of my little frogs' eggs. I started to pick up the bottle, but he grasped my arm and spun me around facing him. "Didn't I tell you I wanted to talk to you?" he half whispered, "why do you always avoid me? You must know I'm in love with you!" I flushed angrily. "For shame!" I answered, "what would your wife say!" He caught his breath a moment, "That woman isn't"—he started scornfully. "Stop, Bert, I know what you are going to say," I interrupted. "If she isn't then more shame to you and the more reason why I shouldn't listen to you. Let me get my horse, please."

He was pale with anger. "Who told you of her?" he cried. "Was it Ray? It was! Tell me, was it?" "Yes, it was Ray," I foolishly admitted. Ray was the younger brother of Roy, a splendid fellow of whom I thought a great deal, just then on his way home from overseas. The brothers were prominent young cattlemen. Roy, the older, had answered the call to arms, while Ray had stayed to protect home interests. Big golden-haired fellows both, and Roy, at least, had a heart of gold, too.

Bert went angry-white at my admission. "I'll get

him," he said slowly and coldly. I would have worried more for Ray if I hadn't been occupied with my own troubles. Hoping our conversation was ended, I started towards my horse again, by whom the dogs lay waiting, but this time Bert caught me in his arms, and held me like a cruel steel trap. As his light eyes came closer and closer to mine I had a quick vision of Roy's laughing blue ones, as he had shown some of us a few simple means of defense one day. Fortunately an outdoor life has made me slim, supple and strong. With my one free arm I struck him on the neck where his larynx showed plainly. "Let go, you—you pollywog!" I gasped, still having my froglets in mind, I suppose. He loosened his hold in surprise and I trust in discomfort, too, and like a flash I snatched up my precious bottle and ran to my horse. Billy threw back his head and pricked up his ears in surprise at my hurried approach, then started away from us, holding his head on one side, to avoid stepping on the reins. Moments were precious, I dared not look behind me, but stood still. "Billy, let's go home," I urged persuasively. He turned to me at that and waited with his usual docility. I threw the reins back on his neck and swung into the saddle with more haste than grace, for the bottle had to be carefully balanced in my right hand. Horse's hoofs sounded behind us, splashing and rattling in the loose stones of the brook. "Let's go, Billy," I cried, with a whoop besides, that meant full speed ahead to him. We went. I seldom raced my little horse, as he was still coming into his prime, but this time I urged him on down the twisting, narrow canyon road. The black dog bounded easily alongside, the hound, who was old, stuck grimly to the horse's heels, his big ears flopping. When we reached the few level spaces I

appreciated the colt's easy speed—the faster he ran the smoother his gait. We must have looked odd, the racing pony, the graceful black dog, the plodding hound, and I with my short curly hair blowing in the wind, a ketchup bottle full of polly-wogs' eggs, grasped carefully in one extended hand. Once, in a rough spot, Billy stumbled and sprinkled me with the bottle's contents. That must have been the jolt that killed the little embryos, for they never did develop. The rapid beat of a horse's hoofs behind us urged us to continued speed. Not until we reached the big dam almost within sight of town did the pursuit, sinister, tho hidden from view by the curving road, grow fainter and finally cease to be heard. Billy, who understood the race was won when his opponent was no longer heard from, slowed down of his own accord and stretched his neck out, taking in deep breaths. I felt somewhat done up, but a bracing shower, and change of costume from my riding breeches to a French evening gown and a dinner engagement followed by a short musical program I had promised to give, took the afternoon's distressing adventure completely from my mind for the time being.

CHAPTER II.

Promptly at ten A. M. next morning the diplomatic Archie puffed his accustomed way majestically up the steep slope to my bungalow. Archie isn't exactly one of the principal characters, and most certainly wasn't a blond, being a dark chocolate colored individual who considered himself the indispensable major-domo of my establishment. His diplomacies were many and varied. He took the table scraps to his fat pigs, whose shape

somewhat resembled that of their master, and if he found anything among the leavings that he thought might not agree with his pets, he would begin: "Mah goodness! Ain't you at all supahstitious? Don't you-all know it'll bring yo' all kinds of bad luck if yo' don't burn youah coffee grounds?" The same horrible fate if I neglected to burn orange and grape fruit rinds, tea leaves and other things. When he was contemplating a request for an advance on his wages, or some such little favor, I was always forewarned of his intentions by the polite manner in which he invited the dogs out of the house while he swept, holding the door open for them as he called each by his name with respectful dignity. Otherwise, unless I was actually in the room, it was a broom and "Shoo!" that cleared the way for the first chore of the morning.

Thirty years of army service gave him a certain bow-legged, square-shouldered dignity. He was a veteran of the Spanish War, belonging to a famous cavalry regiment. His army record had been spotless and he had attained the rank of sergeant, but the colored inhabitants called him "The Major!" It was never any use to ask Archie a question hurriedly, without proper warning, for his only answer would be a gurgling "Uh um!" till he made for outside and got rid of a large mouthful of tobacco juice, after which he would complacently proceed to answer the question—any question, on any subject, in fact, to his own satisfaction at least.

"Mah! but it ceahtainly am wahm dis mawning," he puffed, mopping his dripping face with his daily clean white handkerchief. "Roamer," he continued, addressing the hound, "would you kindly step outside whilst I sweep? You also, Jimmie?" He pushed the swing-

ing door between the kitchen and living room open and the dogs discreetly stepped out thru the open kitchen door. A few strokes of the broom, then he remarked, "Wahm day fo' scrappin'." I continued to frost a big nut cake in patient silence. More sweeping, then: "Too bad Roy ain't home!" I was used to hearing Archie call half the town by their first name, but this remark surprised me a little, for he was a tactful old fellow, and the very fact that three of Roy's photographs stood about the house, would have kept him from mentioning his name unnecessarily, therefore I dropped a half walnut out of line on the white frosting. "Too bad, too bad," he continued as he worked, "for he sure am de fightenest lad in town." "Dick Duffy has that reputation," I interposed, mildly, for that quick tempered tho' good natured Irishman has held the town's fighting championship for years. "Dick am gettin' old, anyhow dis heah would 'bout be Roy's scrap."

"What do you mean, Archie?" I asked impatiently, pushing the last ornamental walnut way below the frosting. Archie stood still, leaning on the broom as if it were a rifle, and looked at me, opening his eyes wide enough to show white all around the iris. "Didn't you-all know? Didn't you hyeah about it?" He questioned in mock surprise. No need to answer, so I placed the cake carefully in the cake box. He soon continued, "Didn't heah about de big scrap dis mawnin' at de chink restaurant 'tween Bert and Ray?" Ah seed it, seed it myself, when Ah went to get de dog meat." My heart felt like an automobile engine when someone suddenly steps full force on the accelerator, and yesterday's unfortunate occurrence flashed before me.

"What did they fight about, Archie?" I asked

authoritatively, as when spoken to in that tone his years of army training caused him to answer with exact clearness. "'Bout most nothin', I could say. Ray, he's sittin' eatin' ham an' eggs an' coffee—I s'pose 'twas coffee—Bert he come in, looked 'round, then walks up to Ray. Bert's face was wicked mad an' Ray look up quick, an' swallow down a mouthful of ham an' eggs in a hurry. 'Damn you,' dat's what Bert say, Madam, he say, 'Damn you, Ray, what fo' you brand my calves down at Cataract Canyon?' 'I never,' answers Ray, putting down his knife an' fork, an' looking all riled up an' flabbergasted, den he push back his chair, but 'fore he ever stood up Bert hits him one awful wallop. Ray gets to his feet like he was drunk, an' tried to hit back, but he's dazed like, can't even 'fend hisself. Nobody else was there but me an' the chinks, they hoppin' 'round talkin' like monkeys. Ray falls down, gets up, Bert still knockin' him 'roun'. Three times dat happened, then that young chink fellah comes sort o' close, trips Bert up quick with his foot and runs like h—, like a jack-rabbit! 'Course den de fight was over, we all go an' pick up Ray, an' Bert bangs hisself outen de doah."

"Was he badly hurt, Archie?" "Yes, Madam, Bert always aimin' at his face, an' by now he mus' look liken he was ah colored pusson, same's me. I done took him to de doctah, an' all de way dere he say to me, 'Bert's a—sumpen' sumpen', I'll kill him.' 'No need to kill him,' say I, 'Roy'll fix him pretty quick.' Ray he try to smile, but his mouth won't turn out no smiles now. 'He sure will,' he say."

I finished my work about the house mechanically, filled with wrath against Bert, and sympathy for Ray, who, thru me, had been so cruelly handled. Ray and I had always been such good friends; he would come

to me for advice in his many little love affairs, or about the choice of colors for a new suit, or to ask if he might bring some girl up to dinner. I think Ray felt sort of brotherly towards me, for I had never hidden my interest in Roy, tho' nothing serious had passed between us. I felt Roy cared, and knew I liked him more than most of the men of my acquaintance. Roy was something of a rough diamond, but one of those characters whose unconscious motto seems to be "Simplicitas, Sinceritas, Serenitas," which attitude may be the foundation of the aristocracy of this country. Certainly our well-bred, elder European brothers scorn the American with a pose. The all-too-numerous, artificial persons, trying to ape the Old World ways have made a joke of us in other countries for years, but the true unaffected white man, like the American Indians, who are just their sincere upright selves, is accepted and respected in the very courts of Europe—providing he should wish to be, which most of them wouldn't. That the people of this country, at least in this age, are all too inclined to live in a pose is well exemplified in a town of this sort, where there is some little wealth, but refined women of the leisure classes are practically unknown. The man who has made a little money in stock, or lumber, and wishes a home, must choose between the unleavened country girls and the teachers and hotel waitresses, who come here from all over the country. Naturally the latter are usually chosen, and some of them in their working capacity are interesting, often intelligent women, whom one can enjoy meeting, but what a change as the wife of the (comparatively) rich Mr. So and So! What airs! What exaggerated opinions of their own importance! They would amuse if one but passed them by as animals in a zoo, but for

steady diet it bores to extinction. A little group of buildings in the midst of a vast untouched land, which should point out man's petty insignificance, yet this silly pose, more understandable in the East, grips the town. There are exceptions, of course, or there would be no rule, but they are so few, sad to say.

Roy being entirely without this artificialness, was very refreshing, but there were other things about him that worried me. Having a keen, quick, mind and a gambling spirit, he had taken to cards as a duck takes to water, and had made money all too easily that way, both at home and in the army. He was generous, but by no means a spendthrift, and had made some good investments, but he didn't seem to apply the same shrewd energy to his everyday work that he used in card playing, perhaps because clerking suited him so little, for while Ray looked after their cattle interests, Roy worked in town, worked steadily and satisfactorily, but without the keen brilliance naturally his. We always had a fine time together in his leisure hours, hunted, fished and visited the many prehistoric ruins and Indian pictures on cliff walls, the existence of which few knew about. He told me of many other strange and interesting places, which we planned to visit when he returned from the war. My heart said more "if" than "when," especially as time went on, for he reached the trenches the day the armistice was signed. One place Roy told me of which we planned to visit was near Red Lake. He had happened upon it years ago when deer hunting. He described it as a strange volcanic rock formation, where he had picked up odd black stones, octagonal in shape and hard enough to cut glass. The easy going ways of the West are something like those of the South, and to my urging that

here might lie an undiscovered fortune, he only answered unconcernedly, "It might. We'll go there some day."

CHAPTER III.

Archie saddled my big bay horse Jimmy for me before he stalked heavily down the hill to care for his rabbits, chickens, pigeons and pigs. Jimmy wasn't as handsome as the colt, but he held himself so proudly, and was so full of life, shying and prancing along, that he was much admired. He would run away at every opportunity. "Dink," a cattleman originally from Texas, said to owe part of his success to mistaking other people's brands for his own, and another ranchman nicknamed "Doc," with a like propensity, had a long legal controversy over this horse when he was a colt, costing them several thousand dollars. The whole town took sides and made bets in the matter. Both men claimed the colt, which the courts finally awarded to "Doc" on the strength of his statement, late in the trial, that a bullet could be found in the horse's front leg. The bullet was there all right, but a cowboy who was working for "Doc" at that time confided to me when I bought Jimmy several years later that he had put it there himself with "Doc's" help. Jimmy was a splendid animal when I bought him, not worth all the money expended on him in court, but certainly worth an argument. When I met "Dink" he would raise his famous beaver hat and drawl: "An' how's my thousand dollah hawse?"

I rode west toward the old mountain trail that morning, breathing in the clear mountain air which, when

one is once accustomed to it, makes all other atmospheres seem flat, tasteless, almost suffocating. Some varieties of pine blossom only every other year, and this seemed to be the turn for many; the brown and yellow blossoms looked like Christmas stars on the dark green trees. Other blossoms grew up straight like brown candles, all looking fresh and festive. The aspen's leaves were still small, looking like green lace and even the bark had turned from the dead gray of winter to a live greenish-gray tint. The locust trees—"cat claws" the natives call them on account of their thorns—were well budded out. Later they would be full of sweet smelling pink blossoms. Jimmy stopped to drink at a big dam surrounded by oaks, which are the last of all to leaf out, but showing tiny green shoots bursting out of red jackets. The day was warm and both dogs were hot and thirsty. The big black one stood on the bank and lapped carefully, but the hound waded right out and lay down in the water while he lapped it up noisily, watching me with his big brown eyes. This was one of those days when the wind herded clouds like flocks of pure white sheep, hurriedly across an intensely blue Heaven-meadow.

I was mentally absorbing all this beauty when some cattle crashed noisily thru the oak thickets, startling my horse into a series of wild plunges. Accidentally I touched him with one spur and he leaped snorting thru the brush, which ended shortly in a clearing about a ranch. Here, some distance from the house I came in sight of two men bending over something on the ground. One rose, rifle in hand, at my approach, and waved me violently away. I thought he feared the dogs would frighten the cattle about, but had no chance to call them to heel as the big horse was trying to boss

things around just then. To my utter amazement the man raised his rifle and fired, seemingly at me, tho' the bullet went way over my head. That made me more angry than frightened, but whether the shot was meant for me or my dogs could not be decided then, for I loosed Jimmy's head a little and thundered right down upon them. They sprang aside just in time and Jimmy leaped across what they had been bending over, a dead, partly skinned calf. Near the barns and corrals I got the horse under control, and slowed up beside a rider who sat watching me. He proved to be my Irish friend, Dick Duffy. "Whoopee!" he called, "that's some cavallo you have. What'll you take for him?" Then I indignantly recounted to Duffy my experience with the ranch owners. He threw one leg over his saddle horn and looked at me shrewdly with his twinkling blue Irish eyes. "When any one in this country waves you off, turn back," he advised seriously. "Why should I?" I demanded. "It's a free country and I was doing no wrong!" He smiled at my vehemence. "Of course you weren't doing any wrong, it's the other fellow who may be afraid of being caught doing wrong. Those fellows are in need of fresh meat, they havn't many cattle of their own, so, well—their eyesight may be poorer than their appetities."

Then, I "saw daylight" and thanked Duffy for enlightening me. But I still felt indignant over that shot, indignant to think they would try to frighten me that way. I'd have passed them by and never thought of looking at the calf's brand, and if I had seen it, wouldn't have known but that it was their own. Their sense of guilt seemed to make them rattle-headed.

"I'm hungry enough to let my appetite be stronger than my eyesight Dick," said I, "but I won't eat with those birds, so good by!" and I rode off.

CHAPTER IV.

On my return home I was pleased to find a letter from Roy written at a nearby demobilizing camp, saying he would be home in a day or two, so I was not surprised when he telephoned me next morning. Later he came up in his machine. It was typical of Roy that he had at once exchanged his uniform for civilian clothes. I was a little disappointed at that, but no matter what clothes he wore, his erect carriage and direct way of meeting one's eyes would mark him always as a man that had seen service. Many have known the pleasure of greeting old friends and relatives after that trying absence.

We had so much to talk about. Ray's and Bert's fight was mentioned once and I recounted my experience with the latter. Roy's blue eyes flashed like sapphires in the sunlight, tho' he said little and made no threats. I looked at him appraisingly, he was about six feet tall (Bert was several inches taller than that), broad shouldered and powerfully built, long arms with strong, graceful hands. In build he would have compared well with a certain black panther of the prize ring. Roy was far from quarrelsome, however, very slow to anger, and had an unusually sympathetic fair-minded disposition.

Two weeks passed pleasantly. Aside from some musical work, I had little to take my time just then, so Roy and I rode, hunted, fished and climbed mountains. One day, riding about a deserted ranch we found a big pile of half-broken pint milk jars. These I threw with all my strength towards the noon-day sun, and in mid air Roy shattered them with his six-shooter, so that they fell back to earth in a glittering, dangerous rain.

There are quite a few raccoons in this country, so we

hunted around the big city dams one night, sitting on the bank of one while waiting to hear from the hound. No breath of wind ruffled the water, the dark trees were reflected there as in a mirror, all around the edge, while in the center we looked down and saw the silver dust of ages in the sky, reflected there. Roy smoked in silence, neither of us wished to talk. Then we felt as much as saw a change, a deeper hush, as a white veil seemed slowly dropped upon everything. It was the moon's first light and it soon rose from behind the dark pines, as Roy said, "Looking like the glorified souls of all the grapefruit." The change in the light played tricks with my eyes. I thought I saw a huge monster sitting on a knoll across the dam, facing the moon and outlined against the sky. "What is that?" I gasped. Roy was fooled for a moment, too. I heard him catch his breath, then he laughed and picking up a stone threw it towards the "monster." The distance was much less than it had seemed, therefore the object really much smaller. I was relieved and amused to see a common house cat spring up indignantly from its contemplation of the moon and scurry away. We were within a mile of town, still pussy was brave to venture so far from safety, for the wild cats that are numerous here, hate and will kill their domesticated cousins.

The hound treed a coon in an oak tree later, but the victim looked so pitiful holding to the limbs with his little hand-like claws, that we left him safe, tho' frightened, which was all right with every one but the amazed hunting dog; by his expression we must have fallen in his estimation.

Another day, leaving early one morning, we motored thirty-five miles to visit a huge cave. It was somewhat difficult to locate, being in a wild rocky place, at the

foot of a small mountain that was formed of benches of red sandstone, tho' the base was of white limestone, a combination quite frequently met with in this country. The opening of the cave was very small, hardly more than a crevice. I doubt whether it would have been discovered if a cavern with a large entrance partly screened by shrubbery had not been close at hand, a sort of preface to the wonders of its gigantic sister. The former extended straight back about three hundred yards, ending in a point, where some big boulders would have made a good defense for an outlaw's "last stand." This cave was dry and showed signs of having been lived in. We explored it first, thinking it very mysterious and wonderful. Then as we started back to the machine, believing we had seen the "Cathedral Cave," we came upon a small opening in the rocks, into the unknown depths of which reached a rickety ladder. Roy was for going down it at once and it seemed ages before I heard him call, "Come ahead." His voice sounded hollow and ghost-like. "Hold on tight," he continued, "and don't mind the ladder swinging."

I squeezed thru the rocky aperture, holding tight to the ladder and very much minding its swinging. Just that climb from the delicious fresh air and bright sunlight to the floor of the cool, damp cave, where the temperature is said to be about 50 degrees Fahrenheit the year round, took some of the spirit of adventure out of me.

First everything was a blank blackness, with the white spots of daylight beaming thru the narrow opening as if it had followed me down there very much against its will. Even our electric searchlights seemed futile for a while, but gradually our eyes became accustomed to the gloom, as if awakening from sleep, or just

entering into a dream. We found ourselves standing on a church-like gallery, looking down over an immense space, that, at the opposite end, seemed to rise like a pulpit in the purple gloom. The roof was high above us and colored with many beautiful tints. The stalactites and stalagmites, some still in the process of formation, had formed many wonderful things,—lacework, icicles and smooth curved statues of beautiful lines, that seemed to have a significance one could not quite comprehend, as if a sleeping sixth sense was about to awaken and grasp the meaning of them. I am not usually timid, but gladly held Roy's arm as we advanced into the darkness—there was such a feeling of space and mystery about us, and a hush, as in a huge church, over all. I felt an organ's soft notes should have sounded and swelled to mighty tones.

Sometimes there were big rocks and boulders to climb over, many covered with cold, slippery salt, other times the floor was smooth, dusty and soft. Along the walls were shelves, and tiny grottoes, where the gnomes of the mountain seemed to have carved, with patient little hands, the most beautiful laces, flowers and snow scenes imaginable. Upon examination the main "Cathedral" seemed to be about a quarter of a mile in length and perhaps a hundred feet wide, but from the entrance cave opened many small passages which opened again, some at once, some after many windings, into rooms of varying sizes. These in their turn had many more openings, until a bewildering labyrinth of unexplored mysteries presented themselves, that for their very unknown possibilities made one want to hurry from the place, the unknown being always as terrifying as it is fascinating. I crawled thru one small opening on my hands and knees and came out into a

room larger than most of them. Turning my light about I spied on the ground something that looked like a broken stalagmite of unusually peculiar design. I knelt beside the odd thing that glistened from the salt deposit and found it was a human skeleton! I backed thru the low entrance and calling, "Roy, come on, let's go outside," started to scramble over the rocks as fast as possible.

"Wait," he answered from the blackness. "If you want to go out you are headed the wrong way!" I crept back to where his search light gleamed, chilled to think how easily I might have been lost, to be found long after, perhaps, as I had just found those cold, old bones.

I was glad to have Roy guide me, until far off I saw a white glimmering of sickly day light, then I bounded for it, feeling like a diver who has been too long under water and struggles with straining lungs towards the surface.

Of course, later, sitting comfortably on the rocks above the cave, with the sun shining warmly, wild flowers everywhere and a great profusion of flowering cactus about me, I felt quite differently, and by the time Roy had climbed out beside me and was lighting his customary cigarette, I had started planning a true exploring party with powerful lights, food, water and guiding lines. Roy was inclined to attribute my story of the skeleton to an imagination over-wrought by the strange surroundings, but, in spite of my fright, or rather before I had entirely realized what I had discovered, I had dislodged from its bed a bit of evidence, and now proudly pulled from the pocket of my hunting coat a piece of human jaw bone, which I dropped casually on his lap.

The old hound, who had motored down with us, was delighted to see us emerge from the blackness, safe and sound. He had watched our descent with whines of misgivings, for to him a cave meant many possibilities of danger and how could we dull humans get along without his warning and protection? He was glad when we started back to the car, and sprang up on the back seat with great agility, considering his age and size, settling down contentedly for the trip home. This he agreeably livened for himself by barking his derision at the thousands of prairie dogs that scuttled to their holes as we passed and then stood on their hind legs, stretched to their full height, to watch us.

CHAPTER V.

Roy and I sat on the big front porch of my bungalow one evening, and watched the red sunset fade away behind "The Three Sisters," three mountains close together, of volcanic origin, where an old crater could still be visited.

Roy spoke of our tastes in common, of the out-of-the-way places in the world we both wanted to visit. I should have stopped him and changed the subject, but somehow I let him go on. Then he told me of his growing cattle interests, that would soon yield him a good income, and said simply but very earnestly that he loved me and asked me if I'd marry him. I looked at him in the dim light—this boy so much like myself—but with a bringing-up and environment that had been so different.

"Roy," I asked, "can't you understand that I couldn't marry a man who gambled?"

"Why," he gasped, "I do make some money that way, it's surely no worse than most business methods. I didn't know you minded it."

"You put the same energy into card playing that a successful business man does in his life work, you have his keen, quick brain and good judgment, but in your every-day work you plod along, showing the world 'your hand,' so to speak. Won't you give up the cards and take up the game of life instead? I'm sure you can make a success of business if you try." I feared Roy might be offended at my outspokenness. He was silent for a long time, then he answered earnestly, "I think I understand what you mean, no one ever put things that way to me before. I'd like to think it over."

After a short silence I tried a new subject.

"Why don't you go in for society here more, Roy," I asked?

"Why don't you?" he asked laughingly.

"For the same reason you don't probably," I laughed back. For outside of a few unpretentious worthy friends and still fewer educated humorous and understanding ones, the society of the small town was a joke, when it wasn't actually exasperating. "Here's an example why I don't any more than I have to," I went on. "Mrs. So and So dined with me not long ago. You know her, married lately to a man with a small stock outfit, tho' it seems very large to her, no doubt. She dusted off every chair before she sat down, tho', as you may have noticed, I simply don't allow dust in my house. To make conversation, I mentioned that one of the garages had been trying to sell me a small coupe, and asked if they hadn't tried to get her to buy it, too. First she withered me with a scornful glance and then by the tone in which she answered: 'They know better

than to offer me that little thing. I would only consider a large car!"

"Were you properly annihilated?" asked Roy laughingly.

"Properly, but evidently not sufficiently," I told him, "for later during another impending conversational lull, I spoke of my intention of having patent boarding put upon the interior walls of my thinly built little bungalow. 'It really gives a very artistic effect,' I told the lady, 'have you ever used it?' She looked me over a moment, then replied scathingly, 'That stuff? Oh yes! I had it put in my clothes closets, because it's—cheap!'"

"For heaven's sake!" gasped Roy, "but they are most all like that here, why don't you assert yourself?" For Roy's army camp in New Jersey had been near my old home, where my parent's wealth is something of a by-word. "But why?" I answered. "Let them enjoy the sense of their own importance. Where I am known I'm always accorded so much respect, that this other gives me a new sidelight into human nature and usually affords me much amusement, tho' I can't help wishing people weren't that way."

Roy left soon after without again mentioning the subject we both felt so keenly. I wondered what he was planning, for I saw determination in his blue eyes. I held out my hand at the porch door to wish him good night, but he took it in both of his and said, "My sweetheart!" very convincingly in his deep-toned voice. "Indeed, I'm not!" I protested, drawing back. "Sweetheart mine!" he reiterated very earnestly, tho' smiling a little and then without wishing me good night walked off down the hill, politely escorted for a few blocks by both dogs.

CHAPTER VI.

Two days later Roy went to work in the big lumber mill, the offices of which were situated in town. The mill and railroad were the only excuses for the town's being in existence. I was sorry Roy and I hadn't visited the cinder mountain near Red Lake, in fact, I believe it was much more on my mind than his. My interest was not without foundation. A few months before these incidents I had made a very sad trip to New York, the only bright spot of which was on the return, and somewhat concerned the strange black stones Roy described to me that he had found at the mountain. Word came that my youngest brother was very ill at a hospital in Spuyten Duyvil, opposite our old home on the Palisades, which flank the west side of the Hudson River. He lay almost within sight of the spot where he had been born. I never found a trip across the continent of such agonizing slowness as the one I made on that occasion.

Altho' it was against the rules of that institution, I persuaded the Mother Superior to put a little cot for me among the house servants in the hospital and so was able to be with my brother until the end. Here after ten days of almost constant attendance on him, during which I listened to his plans of returning West with me, smiling, tho' I nearly choked, for I knew he could never come except in spirit, he died—my best friend and baby brother—with his eyes on mine to give him courage in the passing, which he only just realized was at hand. His wonderfully keen mind and spirit were never pulled down by the wasted body tho' he was unable to speak above a whisper, weeks before his

death. Afterwards I tried to take up the life I had been brought up to, but how artificial everything seemed! Whether it was just the loss I had suffered that made things seem this way, or partly my years spent in the West, I do not know, anyhow everything and nearly every one seemed insincere, the life they led a crude cartoon of how man was meant to live. It was not that I lost all capacity to enjoy the old interests, for my musical associates gave me a hearty welcome that warmed my heart, and I could have taken up my work among them at once. I had started my singing as a parlor accomplishment years before, but it had swelled rather unmanageably into a grand opera debut, and my work had always been far dearer to me than society. Clothes held some of their old charm, too. I delighted in walking up one side of Fifth avenue from my hotel at Thirty-fourth street to where the shops thinned out, and coming back the other side. Here I absorbed sights I had been starving for and felt I had known what the predominating colors for spring would be—burnt orange and robin's egg blue that year—before I had heard of or seen them. Still I longed for the West, where a breath of air was a vitalizing thing, not a breathed-over bit of lung fuel, and I longed for a view of distances, without some building looming in front of my very nose. So it was with a feeling of relief that I cut short my stay, and late one afternoon stepped into a fast train that took me thru a misty New York, where the lights had begun to glimmer and shine in the wet black streets. It took me by dark rivers full of floating cakes of gray-white ice, round a curve, and by the very hospital where I had spent ten of the saddest days of my life, but days more sadly dear to me than any I had ever spent before. My heart seemed to twist

as I looked up at the big red brick building. Night was settling down fast, but it loomed quite clearly in the dusk. I knew how cold and bare it was inside, with only a few lights burning, how the inmates coughed and suffered, yet the Spirit of Happiness dwelt there, too, as everywhere, symbolized perhaps by the golden canaries in their golden homes, pouring out the golden notes of their happiness. These little birds were in many rooms all over the big building, and sang, no matter what the weather. By the time I was able to notice things about me again the car windows presented but a blackness with an occasional flash of light.

The reaction from the strain I had been thru was greater than I at first had supposed, and the long journey completely exhausted me. It was not until the train was near the Rockies that I began to feel better. Here the air was worth bothering to breathe in big deep breaths and life began to seem more livable. I lingered several days in a gem of a little city at the foot of Pike's Peak, feeling more at peace than I had in many weeks, but almost prostrated and quite unable to proceed to my journey's end. My doctor recommended rest and relaxation and ordered my hair "bobbed." When I felt strong enough, little red headed Mary, with skin like peaches and cream, saw me off on the West-bound Limited, brought me a lovely present to open on the train, too. She's the best friend in the world, and had done me many good turns. This time she happened to do me an especially good one, for she found an old acquaintance, a man, in my car, to whom she introduced me, who on further acquaintance nearly proved to be a long-sought-for ideal, tho' not one of these super-handsome beings. His hair was decidedly gray at the temples and if he had not been a sportsman

and an athlete he would have been really stout.

"Goodby," called Mary as the train started. "Be good, both of you!" Now began the part of the journey I had dreaded most in my present state of mind, lonely desert spaces, mountains and rough passes, appallingly wonderful red cliffs and fortress-like walls and huge odd shaped rocks that always seemed to me to hold a secret meaning, like a forgotten name I struggled to recall. My new companion held some keys to these mysteries, at least he knew the history of the formation of each stratum of rock, and certain formations I learned held wealthy mineral possibilities. Even the soil, that dry impossible looking sun-baked desert earth, would yield a rich reward, he said, when thru some mighty achievement, water was brought to it. This was well proved on the Navajo reservation, which stretched for miles along the track. Here the Indians, pushed by the greed of the whites in power, to what seemed a barren waste, have irrigated their land from the Rio Grande and produced the most fertile, wealthy farms in the United States. Is it not perhaps God's fairness? Think of these waste lands in Oklahoma and Texas, loaded upon the poor Indians, which, producing oil, have made their owners among the richest people in the world!

My companion told me that much of the country was of volcanic origin and showed me from the Pullman window one red mountain that still smoked when the earth on the Pacific coast trembled. This brought to my mind Roy's black stones, found on the cinder mountain, and I told him about them. He asked me many questions, more than I could answer—for I really knew very little about the matter—then told me that from the little he could learn he judged these stones were

bits of augite, a mineral of value as a cabinet specimen only, or they might possibly be black diamonds. He said diamonds of different colors and considerable value were now being mined by New York's largest jewelry firm, in Arkansas.

My new friend also delighted in exploring the caves and ruins of the ancients and had done so far more extensively than I had. He, too, liked to hunt and ride and loved nature for all its many wonders. Here was a man born and well educated in the East, retaining all the polish and worldliness of civilization, yet years spent in the West had broadened him, knocked off the superficiality of the East, till East and West had blended in a well-nigh perfect combination. I was charmed, fascinated and perfectly at home with him. For the first time since my brother's death some one had raised me from a constant feeling of loneliness and loss, for the first time I was able to speak of my trouble—for all these things I liked him, tho' our dear little friend Mary was enough in common to draw us together.

Perhaps I should not have allowed this friendship that started so well to drop with a final handshake at midnight, which was the hour the Limited stopped at my little Arizona mountain town. Of course, being a decided, tho' silvered, brunette, he can have no very important part in this story. So we parted, yet sometimes I have felt that he hasn't entirely dropped out of my life.

CHAPTER VII.

Roy spent many of his evenings with me. He never complained of his work but I could see he found the dull monotony of it very irksome and did not blame

him as there lay no chance of advancement in it. While Roy was steady and cheerful he was far from being the tread-mill type of man, and I suppose felt often tempted to take a fling at cards again with which he had always been so successful. Partly with the idea of quieting his restlessness I urged him to take me to the Red Lake hill—the natives call all the small mountains “hills”—the following Sunday, which turned out to be a warm day for spring. We motored out along the Grand Canyon road, passed Red Lake and stopped opposite the hill we were bound for, leaving the car behind some cedar trees at the edge of a little draw. We crossed the railroad tracks and turned to see if the car was visible from that point as section hands scooting along the rails on little gasoline speeders have been known to stop and strip a temporarily abandoned machine. From there we climbed a long gradual ascent. The hound followed sadly at our heels, with a sort of “how dry I am” expression on his doleful face, nothing here but rabbits, jack and cotton tails, none of which are worthy of the notice of a “big game” hound. We did come upon a fresh badger hole, but of what avail is that, for a badger is reputed to be able to dig deeper as fast as a man can dig him out, and we hadn’t even a shovel. Then we began the real ascent, scrambling and zigzagging up the steep slope, dodging branches, starting small avalanches of stones, finally stopping for a much needed rest in the shade of some scrubby cedar trees, where we sucked oranges to quench our thirst. I couldn’t enjoy mine, however, as the hound looked at me with such a thirsty, reproachful expression, tho’ I knew it was water he wanted, not orange juice. A short rest and we were off again, to climb until we could climb no longer!

"I haven't been here in years," said Roy. "Hope I can find the place. We'll just keep working around this hill and we're almost bound to come to it. If it wasn't so far along the road, the best way to come here would be on horseback."

Once I screamed with delight as I picked up a long, shiny black stone. Roy looked at it and smilingly shook his head. "That's flint," he told me.

We worked well up towards the top of the little mountain. Roy kept me going by such encouraging remarks as, "Must be almost there." "Just 'round the corner may be the place." It did seem endless. There was little or no sign of game after we started the real ascent, but we found a horned toad evidently dead, on a red ant hill, where I fancied the savage insects had stung him to death. Roy drew me to a seat in the shade and told me to watch. Ants crawled all over the toad's still form, then one crossed his face and climbed over his nose. One snap and the ant had disappeared into the toad's mouth, after which he became statue—still again. "You see," said Roy, "he's only enjoying his Sunday dinner!" The view was fine, the Lake looked red indeed, colored by the clay about and beneath it. We could see the treeless, newly plowed little farms that sparsely sprinkled the district. The tiny moving objects below that looked like animated inmates of a toy Noah's Ark were cattle feeding.

Roy seemed worried, he scouted far ahead of me. We had circled two-thirds of the mountain when I heard a joyous shout of, "Here we are!" I had climbed far above him and came out suddenly from the cedars to an entirely bare glacier-like yellow rock formation, that spread itself like a petrified waterfall, starting narrowly from the mountain's top and widening out to about a

hundred yards, two-thirds of the way down the mountain. The surface, tho' very steep, looked easier climbing than the loose rocks and bushes I had been working my way thru and over, I started down towards Roy, when he called warningly, "Don't step on it, you'll fall!" The yellow rock had the rough appearance of stucco, but was treacherously slippery, two steps and my feet went from under me. I started to roll down the abrupt descent, my hands grasping futilely at the rough rocks, which only scraped and bruised them. The branch of an enterprising little cedar tree that grew on the edge of this old lava flow, as a willow might grow on the edge of a brook, came just within my grasp as I slipped downwards, and I pulled myself "to land," so to speak, by it's timely aid, partly up-rooting the helpful little tree in my struggles. I had shortened the distance between Roy and myself by half, but I was considerably shaken up, my clothes were ragged and my hands bleeding.

"Are you hurt? I'll be with you in a few minutes," called Roy. He had started a detour up among the trees to me. "Don't bother," I called back. "I'll be all right when I catch my breath. Look for the stones!" Soon he called that he'd found one and then more. "Aren't there any up there?" he asked as he saw me crawl gingerly out on the yellow surface of the rock. "I don't see any," I answered. The fact was I didn't know what to look for, so I backed to safer ground again, and proceeding to Roy's level worked cautiously to his side. He showed me five or six small black stones, averaging perhaps an inch long and half an inch wide, some by themselves, some partly embedded in a greenish quartz. They were octagonal in shape, smooth and very hard, but so much smaller than I had supposed

that I might have passed by many where I had first come upon this odd place, as I had my eyes for something the size of a robin's egg.

Now, spread out like the horned toad on the ant hill, I maneuvered about, searching for and finding some of the peculiar little stones. The rough surface tore my clothes and the sun scorched me and made the rocks very hot, but I worked on silently, unheeding, even forgetting Roy in the fascination of the search. We finally worked down, one on each side of a canyon-like groove in the rock near the base, and agreed to discontinue further searching till we had our specimens analyzed. Under a cedar tree we ate our last two oranges, and weeded out the best of the stones. Roy had larger, better ones than I. It was late afternoon when we started back to the automobile. The hound who had watched our strange hunt in amazement and disgust, from the shade of a tree, trotted after us until he "winded" the lake, then making straight for it he had a refreshing swim, joining us at the car later.

I didn't realize how tired I had become till I started downward. It was only with Roy's aid that I managed it, laughing and happy tho', both of us, with hopes for the value of this discovery that we dared only hint at. I offered, as there was no assayer in town, to send some specimens to the mining engineer I had met thru Mary, on the train, and ask him to have them assayed. And we agreed to put the matter from our minds as much as possible until we received the analysis.

CHAPTER VIII.

I had had fleeting glimpses of Bert about town, in fact at times he was very much in evidence. He did not attempt to talk to me, but always happened to have business in whatever store I went into. I asked Roy about him, for I often wondered that there had been any peace between them. "Bert!" he answered grimly. "Oh yes, he came to me the other day with a scheme to make 'Mucho danaro pronto.' "

"Gambling?" I asked. "And then some!" Roy replied. "He wants to start a distill in the woods, says he can market the stuff by the barrel. There's lots of money in it, of course, if he isn't afraid of the risk." "The lawless brute!" I exclaimed. "Roy, I don't believe he'd dare attempt it, he'd just trying to get you into trouble. Of course you wouldn't consider it." "I might have once," he answered frankly. "It's not more lawless than most high finance schemes, tho' it is more dangerous, but I see things in a very different light than I used to. As to Bert setting a trap for me, he may have tried to. He fears me and would like to have me out of the way for several reasons, but what chance has he? I haven't forgotten what he's done and am watching for an opportunity to settle with him, tho' I'd never play a 'crooked hand' to get it, as he would."

Somehow I feared for Roy, for he was so decent himself that he didn't seem aware of the baseness of others, but I knew it would annoy him to show I was worried about him.

"This ten-hour day in an office," Roy burst out one evening, "is, is,—well I guess I wasn't meant to work indoors!" He struggled with himself a moment, then

looking very much ashamed continued, "What's the matter with me anyhow? Lots of other fellows do it, and I can stick it out too!" But I understood his feelings, I should have hated the uninteresting grind myself and that big, active fellow, with far-seeing eyes that were used and meant to look great distances, instead of at figures and letters, was about as much at home in an office as an elephant in a mouse trap. I sent up a silent prayer for his future to the One Who Understands, "Believing, ye shall receive," it ended, "Lord help thou my unbelief!"

That next week I was busy working up some new songs for a recital and only saw Roy a couple of afternoons, when he had half holidays. One we spent riding out to a dam on one of his father's ranches where the cat fishing is good. I rode Billy and on arriving took off his saddle and bridle, letting him run loose and graze with Roy's horse, but with his usual docility, which is also largely mixed with curiosity, he followed at our heels as far as the little row boat, and if ever a horse showed bewildered astonishment, he did, when we rowed away. He snorted and ran, came back to make sure, rushed off again and watched us from behind a knoll. At intervals all thru the afternoon we'd hear a snort and looking up, would find him regarding us apprehensively from behind some building or rise of ground.

The ride home was without a moon, but the stars were wonderfully close, as they usually seemed in that altitude and we studied them with the aid of a splendid little map a dear Eastern lady sent me monthly. I told Roy I hadn't heard from the assayer and couldn't imagine what took so long. Roy, however, seemed rather indifferent about it. He never had been as

hopeful as I, being more practical and less imaginative.

Another afternoon we spent an hour eating a late picnic lunch, in a spot that was a veritable fairyland. Here a little brook slid singing down a mountain, thru a deep forest. We sat by its edge and watched with delight one clear pool where the water stirred just enough to wave gracefully the long green moss within its crystal clearness. Deep pink roses grew on bushes beside it, stooping over to see themselves and generously dropping their soft petals in the water, where they turned slowly around. Above the rose bushes were short thick locust trees, laden down with great grape-like clusters of intensely sweet blossoms, pinker even than the rose. Humming birds darted in and out, and above all a cloudless sky, so soft and blue.

"It is perfect," I whispered. Roy liked it too, I know, but he would sometimes laugh at my enthusiasm. "There are thorns on the locust trees and the rose bushes, I see worms eating the roses, and horrid leeches lurking under the stones, a dust storm seems to be on its way," he said. "That's to make us appreciate all this beauty, we wouldn't know how lovely it was without those opposites," I answered. That night I dreamt of that spot again. It was perfection indeed, no thorns marred the beautiful stems and branches, no leeches lurked in the brook, the sky was without a hint yellow dust clouds, and more beautifully blue than I had ever seen it, the flowers far sweeter and pinker, I tasted the clear water and found it delicious, groups of silver laugh-bubbles floated slowly thru the air, some high, some skimming the water, and the humming birds, shining iridescent, darted in and out of the rose bushes. I knew it was a glimpse of Heaven, and that Heaven sometimes comes to earth, as I had seen it that day.

CHAPTER IX.

Two days later I received this wire: "Returned from New York a few days ago. Analysis of your specimens just received. Carbonado, valuable. Let me know if I can be of further service. E. T. L."

I took up the telephone, but was too excited to call Roy at once and was spared the necessity for just then the telephone rang and in reply to my answering hello" I heard Roy himself asking if he could come up that evening. "Yes, do come, Roy," I managed to say, "and it's it." "What," came his astonished half comprehensive answer, then; "It is? Well, no more adding machines for mine! Me for a pick and a stick of dynamite. I'll be thru here this evening and will come up as soon as I can."

He had cared, in spite of his seeming indifference. I could tell it now by the ring in his voice. I felt sure he would not fail in the many trials and arrangements to come. I felt that in that moment he had snapped into his real self with all his abilities in readiness at his command. Also I did not fail to thank the One who had strengthened my faith.

My estimation of Roy was not at fault, as the following busy weeks proved. With Ray, and as they both insisted upon it—me, he staked out claims over that stratum of volcanic rock, up to the top of the mountain. Careful investigation on both sides showed no signs of the diamonds elsewhere, nor did riding carefully over the adjoining mountains show any trace of the stones or the peculiar rock bed in which they were found. We kept our discovery as quiet as possible, but the necessary tools and supplies we had to purchase, the fact that

one of us was always on guard in that vicinity and our constant going back and forth from the town to the mountain, was soon remarked. Wild stories about what we had discovered spread around, which varied from gold to a petrified mammoth. Therefore the boys thought it best to make a clear announcement of our mine, and form a small company, giving some shares to a few reliable, honest men, for we needed help with the work and would have to double our guard, as the townspeople came out to our camp in great numbers, and many of the diamonds were still loose upon the surface. Many people had of course staked out claims about us, but they worked little if at all with them, and always returned to town towards evening. Ray, shortly after the company was formed, went away to negotiate a market for the raw stones and order the needed machinery and accessories for a more permanent mining camp.

We chose those who were to be associated with us after careful consideration, Dick Duffy, that fearless Irishman, an old and devoted friend of the boys, "Samson" so nick-named for his strength and long hair, a man of integrity and some experience in this sort of mining. He had once done me a very good turn. At my request we included the Diplomatic Archie, whose delight, was only exceeded by his importance, and Felipe, a New Mexico Mexican of superior intellect and education, who was experienced in mining turquoise. We surmised, and the expert we employed corroborated this, that this rock full of concentrated black carbon crystals might not last indefinitely, perhaps not beyond ten or fifteen years of constant working, but there was also no doubt but that many thousands of dollars' worth of gems would be taken from it and Roy

at least, who was the heaviest shareholder, would be a very rich man in a few years.

Bert, prowling about the mine with the blackest of looks, caused me no little uneasiness, tho', being the only woman in the company, I withheld voicing fears no one else seemed to share. He had staked out two claims on the south side of us and put in several terrific charges of dynamite, with just what in view no one seemed to know, tho' he might have had several schemes. I had been followed several times when riding to and from the camp alone, so usually tried to go with one of our men and had strapped a long barreled .38 revolver to my saddle horn. A railroad to the Grand Canyon ran within two miles of the mine, and on this we were expecting Ray back with a carload of machinery and camp supplies any day. He had made all the necessary arrangements and wired of his departure with the freight car, so one evening when Roy, Duffy, Felipe and I were about to ride back to town, "Samson" and Archie having reported for the night, we were not greatly surprised to have a Mexican, one Jose, shifty-eyed and cringing, ride up with a supposed message from Ray, saying he had reached the station in town and been able to arrange to have an engine bring the car right out to Red Lake, and that the men were to be sure to come at once and meet him there to help unload the car which had to be taken back as soon as possible. The message was a verbal one, but we had used Jose as a messenger before and thought little of it. I noted, however, that his shifty yellow eyes swept the group, as he stood in the strong glare of our powerful searchlight, taking stock of every one, myself included, and his hands shook plainly as he rolled a cigarette.

"All right, Jose," said Roy, "we'll go right over, you come along and help us unload."

"No, Senor Roy," he answered, "I go home pronto." He backed off into the darkness and we soon heard his horse galloping rapidly away. I heard a smothered Spanish oath from Felipe. Perhaps he best understood his countryman. "Somebody better stay here and watch the mine," he advised in his soft voice. "I'll stay," I answered promptly, for with the searchlight and my six shooter I had no fear of the cowardly Jose.

"Then some one better stay with you," Felipe advised.

"Nonsense," said Roy, "we can all go, Jose hasn't the nerve of a jackrabbit," and the others seemed to agree with him. I persisted in staying however, finally pleading weariness, as an excuse to have my way. Felipe backed me up, but when it came to his staying as my assistant and protector, Archie rebelled. The Mexican and the darkey were, I think, at heart very friendly towards each other, but outwardly each fought for moral supremacy. Neither would give an inch to the other, one persisting a colored man superior to a "Greaser," the other that a Mexican was far above a "Nigger." To settle the present dispute about which one should help watch the mine, Duffy threw up a bright silver dollar, which elected Archie my body guard, whereupon he strutted about as if it had fallen his lot by Divine Right.

I climbed, by help of a ladder laid against the rock, to what we called the "Lookout," a little excavation in which the search light stood, from where it could be turned over the entire field of our operations. The tank from which the light got its fuel lay well above me to the right, under a group of cedar trees, a tube run-

ning from the tank to the light. Perhaps two hundred yards below me I could see Archie's bulky form sitting on a rock, while Billy, close at hand, lifted his head from grazing to watch the riders disappear.

CHAPTER X.

Voices and hoof-beats died away and everything seemed very still. I started to call to Archie and ask him to bring me my revolver, which lay in its case on my saddle, thrown with the bridle on the ground near him, when I saw a dark shadow slipping along just beyond the light. Was it a coyote? The hound had gone with Roy, hoping for a hunt, and the black dog was home nursing a sore paw.

"Archie," I called, "lookout!" The old man rose and turned towards me, while I swung the light on the moving object which had come so close to the darkey that they were both within the circle of light. I gasped! It was Bert with a gun in his hand which he now thrust close to Archie, ordering him to "Put up your hands and keep quiet." Then, his manner full of a wildness inspired by powerful drink, he called: "Come on, hombres, the woman has no gun!" I wondered how long he had been watching and listening in the darkness. Five or six other shadows drew near. I switched the light about until I had seen them all. Jose was among them and Bert called to him "Jose, take out your gun and watch this nigger; kill him if he tries to get away." Archie's face was a study. It held more of indignant surprise than fear but my heart ached for the brave old fellow who was facing death in my behalf. Jose backed

him to a rock and told him to sit there, while he seated himself on a stump before him, rolling a cigarette with one hand while he kept his gun and eyes on his prisoner. Archie spit tobacco juice violently, but was otherwise as still and solid as the Rock of Gibraltar.

Interest in this situation had taken my attention from the rest of the scoundrels, and it was a horrible shock to me when the gleaming searchlight was suddenly extinguished. Everything was inky black for a short time. I reached for the tube that connected the light with the tank above and it came down upon me like a great worm. It had been cut or pulled out, of course. My heart pounded in the black silence. I wished the direction my friends had taken had been such as to enable them to notice the extinguished light, but unfortunately they were on the opposite side of the mountain. Then things began to brighten up and I knew it must be getting late for the full moon wasn't due until about midnight and it was already throwing out a soft promise of its coming, over all objects. I heard Bert's voice harsh, almost unrecognizable: "There's a bunch of stones cached here somewhere's," he said, "look for them, I'm going after the woman."

A lightless searchlight and a rubber tube are poor weapons of defense. I couldn't even break off a piece of the rock, it was like rough iron. Even the thought of the blow I had formerly dealt Bert was small comfort to me. I was so outnumbered and his coming in the darkness was like the crouching of some huge, unseen beast.

I heard a soft scrambling, a slipping of loose stones as some one made his way along the side of the rock towards the lookout where I stood. First anger overcame dread then dread overcame anger. Spanish curses

diverted my attention to those below. "I have dropped a bag of stones," said the same voice, still in Spanish. "It has rolled towards you, do you see it, Jose?" Jose must have turned to look and it was certainly a bad move for him. Very dimly, by the moonlight, I could see what was happening among the dark cedar trees. Archie had been sitting perfectly still, apparently dozing, now he rose and with remarkable swiftness drove his huge fist into Jose, who fell back dazed, his gun spinning from his hand. With the speed and rolling gait of a big bear, Archie made his way towards Billy, who raised his head and whinnied at his black friend's approach, which usually meant oats and hay. How that man, over sixty years old, weighing two hundred and twenty pounds, vaulted to the back of the unsaddled pony with the agility he might have displayed forty years before, no one, not even he, could explain afterwards, but he did it! The horse reared a little, then rushed snorting towards the road, while Archie's yell, the mad yell of the old black cavalry that saved the Rough Riders at San Juan Hill, rang out like a live thing hurtling thru the air.

I heard Bert cursing horribly as he slid back to the spot where Jose was getting slowly to his feet. The Mexicans, never quick to think in an emergency, huddled together, jabbering like excited monkeys. Bert, choking with rage, strode towards Jose who stood swaying a little and rubbing his head. "You fool," Bert ground out, with some other words I've tried to forget, "Why did you let him get away?" Perhaps the pain he was suffering gave Jose momentary courage for he answered angrily: "Why you don't watch him yourself?" The moonlight flashed on Bert's quickly drawn gun, a short line of red flame and a report fol-

lowed. I saw Jose bend at the knees and fall face downward. The other Mexicans bunched up like frightened sheep. Bert was filled with a power of evil that dominated them, he took a flash light from his pocket and turned it on the still body. "Shot him right in the temple," he half laughed—a brutal tho' hysterical sound that laugh had. To my horror I saw him take a common lead pencil from his pocket and bending over the body, measure the distance the bullet had penetrated into the dead man's head, then rising he calmly returned the pencil to his pocket. Trapped as I was, my only way out by the ladder that ended in their midst, I vowed he should never touch me with those terrible blood-stained hands.

CHAPTER XI.

"Señor," ventured one of the Mexicans, "we better go now, that nigger bring back Señor Roy."

"No chance!" scoffed Bert. "He hadn't even a bridle on that horse. That old coon's lying as still as Jose here along the road by now."

But I wasn't so sure of that. What did Bert know about what kindness will do with man and beast? I knew Archie, his diplomacy had achieved a great success that night, but still better I knew my intelligent little horse, whom I had instructed myself in all his duties. I knew he could be guided by the knees, would stop at the word and outrun any horse in the country at the signal of a shout.

Time! I wanted time and was glad to see my enemies all busy searching for more diamonds. Thus

time passed, I don't know whether it dragged or flew to me, anyhow it passed, for the moonlight grew very strong and the big moon itself stood out from the velvet blue sky, as if contemplating a dive to earth.

Bert finally detached himself from the group he had been with, and I heard him once more climbing up the slope. I could occasionally catch a glimpse of him as he passed from the shadow of one tree to another. My hearing is very keen and I thought I caught a faint sound beyond and above him; it might be cattle, or a wild animal prowling about; it might be—"Lord, help thou my unbelief!" I prayed.

Bert stopped above me at about the spot where the searchlight tank stood; evidently he intended to slide down feet first; I could hear his spurs grinding on the rock.

"You're mighty quiet down there," he called softly; his voice sounded smooth and sarcastic. "Guess I won't need to ask you to listen to my offers of love any more."

"If you come down here I'll kill you!" I answered, and I felt a scorn for him that seemed strong enough to blast with its own power, but he only laughed.

"If that's the case I'll just tie you up," he taunted, and rising till he stood silhouetted against the sky he raised his voice and called: "Hey! hombres, pass me up a rope."

But it was a voice that I knew well as Dick Duffy's that answered him.

"And a rope ye surely shall have!" cried Dick, while as he spoke a great black snake-like thing formed in a circle above Bert's head, then instantly closed about him, pinning his arms to his sides. Duffy was an expert roper. Bert lost his balance and slipped on the

rock, the edge of which he had been standing upon. With a curse he felt the length of the rope's slack and lay scraping against the steep sides. Other forms appeared about the frightened Mexicans below, who fought, but as men without a leader, striking wildly about with what objects they could grasp, as, unlike Jose, they seemed unarmed. I saw Samson's powerful form stride in amongst them, and they fell about him like loose fence posts.

Old Archie sank wearily upon the rock where he had been held prisoner and contemplated the dead Jose as he bit off a large chew of tobacco. Samson and Felipe, the latter seeming quite enraged with his treacherous countrymen, finally bunched the cowardly fellows together and guarded them with their revolvers, which they had not used during the short struggle.

Roy hurried down from Duffy's side and climbing to the lookout half helped, half carried me down, after which he had to hasten back to Duffy, who, with the aid of his cow pony, was dragging Bert up and down the rough cliff, demanding to know how soon he could hang him. Roy had him lower Bert to the ground below, tied him up securely and left him in the watchful Archie's care. Then he had a quiet conversation with Samson and Duffy, while I wandered over to Billy. The colt hung his head, and his sides, wet to touch, still heaved violently.

"Billy, old kid," said I, patting him, "I knew you'd make it!" He rubbed his soft nose against me and murmured a little answer in his own language.

I came back towards the group in time to catch the end of the conversation. Roy, speaking with authority, said:

"So, for her sake perhaps it's better to keep this out of court, but they'll have to have a lesson they can't forget and it's best he should lose caste in their eyes." Then he turned to the frightened Mexicans and, speaking in Spanish, said:

"Now you fellows just line up here and see what sort of a man you've been following. I'll let you go, but if you ever try anything of this sort again, or breathe a word of this affair, one of us will surely kill you, *sabe that?*" A chorus of *Si si, Senor!*" fairly drowned his last word.

"Felipe," he continued, just keep your gun handy on these scamps."

Duffy had reconnected the searchlight and turned it about until he finally trained it in a brilliant yellow circle on some fairly smooth and level ground, then he climbed down to us.

"Now let him up," ordered Roy, and Archie untied Bert, who scrambled to his feet a little sore and scratched, but otherwise all right.

Duffy pushed him into the centre of the circle.

"Take off your spurs," Roy commanded, unbuckling his own, "and those chaps. Hurry now, your shirt, too; I've had some scores to settle with you for a long time, but you've been too cowardly to give me the opportunity, now I'm going to give you what you don't deserve, a chance." Bert seemed perfectly sober now and rather encouraged by the treatment he had so far received.

"Not with guns," Duffy said quickly. Bert had reached back towards his hip, but Duffy drew it out for him and threw it aside. Then Bert paled a little.

"Say, Roy," he began, "you've got no call"——

"If you say one more word I'll put your own Mexi-

cans after you," snapped Roy. I had stood by, slowly realizing what was impending. It was generous of Roy, more than fair, but it did seem so awfully brutal, so entirely against all my ideals and standards. I tried to be a "real fellow" and keep a "stiff upper lip," but I simply wilted and before I knew it was crying in Roy's arms, begging him to take me home, and let the whole thing drop. He led me aside a little. "This has all been so hard on you, dear," he comforted, "and I want to arrange things so that it can never happen again. Don't cry, for I'm going to fight for my sweetheart and the Sweetheart Mine." No one heard us but Duffy, who stood near. Roy handed me to him with a cheerful, "Look after this girl a little while, Dick." Duffy sighed a deep sigh. "I will," he answered, "but that's one fight I'd sure like to see!" Roy walked away. I noticed his broad, powerful shoulders, his long, strong arms that had so lately supported me.

"And all things whatsoever ye shall ask in prayer, believing you shall receive," I whispered, "Lord, help thou"—— I didn't finish the prayer; the ground didn't seem to sink beneath me, but something seemed to fly right out of me and up towards the moon, and my overwrought spirit sought rest and comfort among its dear spirit friends for a few blessed moments. When I came back to life's burdens Duffy, with clumsy gentleness, was trying to make me drink water from a canteen. The lighted circle showed some distance away like an intensely bright camp fire. Not long after Archie's big shape lumbered towards us out of the gloom. "Couldn't a' done bettah mah ownself," he jubilated. "Bert's de biggest man, but Roy he got a good cause, an' he's a boahn fightah!" I sat up—

"Now, Archie, tell us!" I commanded sternly. "Yes, madam," he answered saluting. "It took Roy jus' fifteen minutes to finish Mistah Mormon Bert, an' he let him off easier'n he should have at dat!"

Duffy helped me up, and I started back to camp, but Roy met us half way. He was smoking a cigarette, and save for a bandaged hand, showed no signs of a combat, nor was the other combatant in view, but I noticed the men made occasional trips to one of the tents, sometimes carrying a cup of water.

The moon, as always, failed to meet the powerful eyes of the day, it was fading before a stronger light. The cold wind that comes with dawn made us shiver. Samson had started a fire and was "rustling" the coffee pot while Duffy mixed up some pancake batter. I heard Archie and Felipe arguing loudly about which of their respective races held the most and highest offices.

"The Governor of New Mexico," finally cried Felipe, in an "answer-that-if-you-can" tone. Archie hesitated a minute, he seemed stumped, then, "The President of Liberia!" he shouted triumphantly.

They had been harnessing a mule team to a light wagon, after which they both disappeared into a tent close by and came out presently carrying a burden between them that grunted and swore, but they kept on arguing. Flinging their burden in the back of the wagon with little ceremony and climbing to the high wagon seat, they rattled off over the dim trail, their voices still raised in friendly dispute.

Roy and I sat on a rock. He looked at me and I at him, then we smiled. Birds began to twitter and the east turned red as a new day fought its battle for life.

Duffy put out the searchlight, but we never noticed him above us till he dropped his rope over us both.

"A lover's knot," he called down banteringly.

"Indeed, you're wrong," answered Roy a little sadly, as he slipped the noose off over our heads.

"Am I, indeed!" answered Duffy, as he started down, "well, anyhow, ladies and gents, breakfast is politely served in the—the dining out!"

"We'll come in a minute," Roy called after him.

We rose together, but he delayed me with a hand on mine. "I'm not going to ask for any promises," he said. "I know I'm rough, but like these little stones of ours, I might polish up. Of course I don't expect you to do the polishing for me, I'm going to try to improve myself, and then"——

I wanted to tell him that I liked him just as he was, but it seemed better to let him work things out his own way, so I nodded and smiled in spite of a few tears, and we joined the boys at the piping hot breakfast. Duffy had just picked up a bottle half full of whiskey, dropped by Bert, I suppose. I looked at him with some apprehension. Duffy's fondness for drink is an established fact, and drink is as rare as roses in winter. He jumped upon an empty packing box and held the bottle above his head with a dramatic gesture as we approached. "Heavens, Dick, don't drink that stuff," I begged, having visions of his drinking an embarrassing toast to our imaginary happy future. He smiled, and holding the bottle still higher, called loudly: "I hereby christen this here valuable dump the 'Sweet-heart Mine,' and he threw the bottle upon the hard yellow rock, which splintered it into tiny pieces. Duffy sniffed the air, which was strongly alcoholic for the

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moment. It had indeed been a heroic deed for our Irish friend.

So I made a millionaire! But whether this is the end of a story or only the beginning, only time can tell.

September, 1920.



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